

# THE LIFE OF RUSKIN



E. T. COOK



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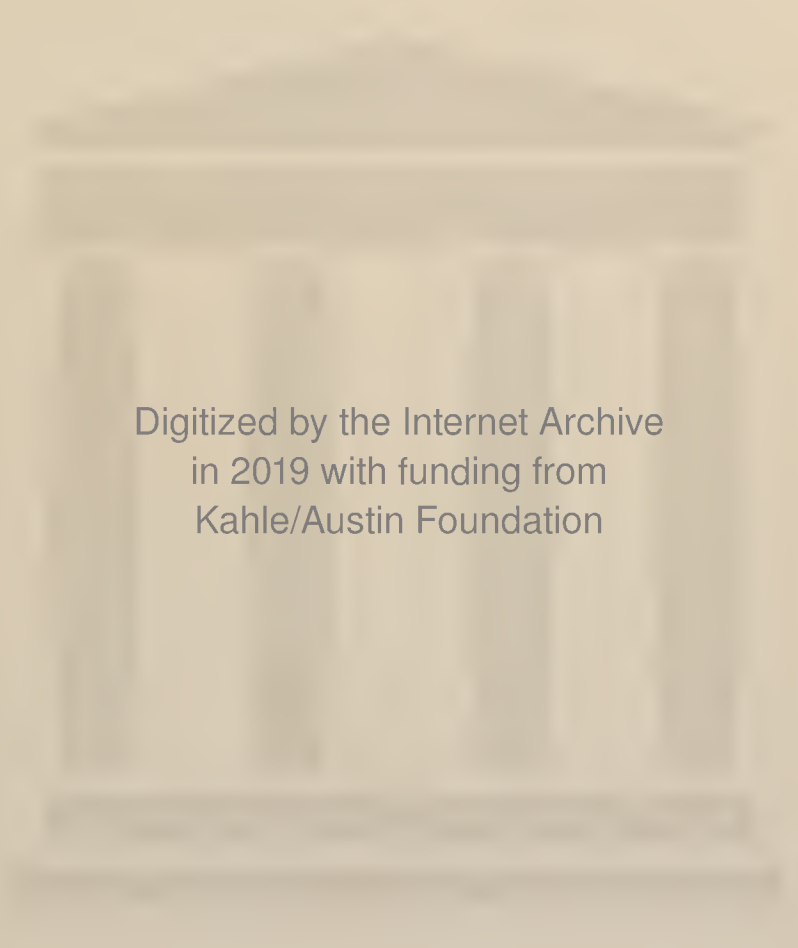




# THE LIFE OF JOHN RUSKIN







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G. P. Abraham, Photo

Ruskin at Brantwood

1885



# THE LIFE OF JOHN RUSKIN

BY

E. T. COOK

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II

1860-1900

WITH PORTRAITS

NEW YORK  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & CO. LTD.

1911

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## VOLUME II

(1860-1900)

### CHAPTER I

#### UNTO THIS LAST

(1860)

“Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life; anarchy and competition, eternally and in all things the laws of death.”—*Modern Painters*, vol. v.

AMONG the lectures which as an undergraduate I heard Ruskin deliver at Oxford, one has more particularly stayed in my memory. I had gone to the lecture-room in good time, for otherwise there was no chance of getting a good place; and some minutes before the appointed hour, the Professor's servant came in and deposited five large and sumptuously bound volumes upon the right hand of the table, the lettering on them carefully turned towards the wall. Presently Ruskin entered, to the usual accompaniment of applause, carrying a small volume in faded green cloth. He was an adept in the art of exciting curiosity; and after transferring the pile of the large volumes to the left-hand side of his desk, he laid down the little green book on his right hand—looking up at the audience thereafter, with a genial smile, as much as to say, “Now, don't you wonder what the books are and what I am going to tell you about them?” He did not keep us long in doubt. The subject of the course to which the lecture belonged had been first announced as “Landscape Painting”; but it never much mattered what Ruskin's lectures were called, and the course was in fact an informal commentary at large upon his books and teaching. From 1845 to 1860, he said, he had gone on writing with more or less public applause; and then in 1860 people saw a change come

CHAP. I. over him, of which they highly disapproved. For fifteen years precisely his writings had been thought praiseworthy; and for fifteen precisely, thought the reverse.<sup>1</sup> "These volumes on my left" (turning them round and pushing them from him) "are the volumes of *Modern Painters* which were praised; this volume on my right is the one which changed praise into blame. I got a bound copy of the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* at St. Martin's in the summer of 1860, and in the valley of Chamouni I gave up my art-work and wrote this little book" (taking it up in his hand)—"the beginning of the days of reprobation. But it is written in a better style; it is the central work of my life; and it contained at once the substance of all that I have had since to say." The little book was *Unto this Last*.

## I

The completion of *Modern Painters* left the author exhausted, and suffering in some measure from the effects of reaction after a long spell of concentration upon a particular task. "I am more tired out," he wrote to Dr. John Brown (Lausanne, Aug. 6, 1860), "than the bulk of that last volume would apparently justify, but not half the work I did is in it. I cut away half of what I had written, as I threw it into the final form, thinking the book would be too big." One of the chapters crowded out of *Modern Painters* was a paper upon "Sir Joshua and Holbein," which Ruskin sent accordingly for publication in one of the early numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine*, which had been launched by his publisher, under Thackeray's editorship, in January 1860.<sup>2</sup> The sheets of the book were passed in May, and leaving his father to see the work finally through the press, the author set out for Chamouni. "My father well pleased," he says, "with the last chapter and the engraved drawings from Nuremberg and Rheinfelden.

<sup>1</sup> He was speaking in 1877. The fifteen years take us only to 1875; in which year he noted yet another change, but that does not at present concern us.

<sup>2</sup> Ruskin's paper appeared in March; it was reprinted in *On the Old Road*; and, in the Library Edition, vol. xix.



On the strength of this piece of filial duty I am cruel enough to go away to St. Martin's again, by myself, to meditate on what is to be done next. Thence I go up to Chamouni—where a new epoch of life and death begins.”<sup>1</sup>

Of Ruskin's sojourn abroad in this year (May–Sept.) there is no detailed record. He kept no diary, for this was doubtless written in the form of the usual daily letter to his father, but the letters of 1860 have not been preserved. His companion was an American, Mr. W. J. Stillman—then a young artist, whose acquaintance he had made nine or ten years before, and of whose studies of landscape he hoped great things. Mr. Stillman, who was Ruskin's guest, says that “more princely hospitality than his no man ever received, or more kindly companionship.” They spent much time in sketching together, Ruskin sometimes sitting over his pupil and directing his work so closely that, as another pupil said, “he wanted me to hold the brush while he painted.”<sup>2</sup> “Every day,” says Mr. Stillman, “we climbed some secondary peak, five or six thousand feet, and in the evenings we discussed art or played chess, mainly in rehearsing problems, until midnight.” On Sundays no work was done, and once they fell into a discussion of Sabbatarianism. Stillman pointed out the critical objections to the identification of the weekly rest with the first day of the week. “To this demonstration,” he says, “Ruskin, always deferent to the literal interpretation of the Gospel, could not make a defence; the creed had so bound him to the letter that the least enlargement of the structure broke it, and he rejected the whole tradition—not only the Sunday Sabbath, but the authority of the ecclesiastical interpretation of the texts.”<sup>3</sup> Mr. Stillman exaggerates the effect which this one “demonstration” had upon the course of his friend's thoughts; but the reminiscence agrees with the sceptical mood into which Ruskin was now entering. “So you have been seeing the Pope and all his Easter performances!” (he wrote to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe,

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 12.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Rowse: see Stillman's *Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

CHAP. I. whose acquaintance he had made in Switzerland on an earlier tour); "I congratulate you, for I suppose it is something like 'Positively the last appearance on any stage.' What was the use of thinking about *him*? You should have had your own thoughts about what was to come after him. I don't mean that Roman Catholicism will die out so quickly. It will last pretty nearly as long as Protestantism, which keeps it up; but I wonder what is to come next. That is the main question just now for everybody."

## II

"I have been chiefly drawing Alpine roses, or rather Alpine rose-leaves," Ruskin wrote to Dr. John Brown. But his real occupation was the "Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy" which he called *Unto this Last*. His diversion to economic inquiries was not so much a change as a development. His æsthetic criticism had from the first been coloured throughout by moral considerations. His study of architecture had convinced him that art is the expression of national life and character. He who would raise the flower must cultivate the proper soil. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"; yes, added Ruskin, but a joy which is to be for ever, must also be a joy for all.<sup>1</sup> His love of beauty, his study of art, had brought him up full front to an examination of the principles of national well-being. His exquisite sensibility to impressions of beauty in the world of nature thus became also

"a nerve o'er which do creep  
The else unfelt oppressions of mankind."

"It is the vainest of affectations," he afterwards wrote, "to try and put beauty into shadows, while all real things that cast them are in deformity and pain."<sup>2</sup> He was in debate within himself, as passages in the last volume of *Modern Painters* show, how far he could honestly or with any inward satisfaction pursue the cultivation of the beautiful in art, without first endeavouring to realise the good and beautiful

<sup>1</sup> *Aratra Pentelici*, § 17.

<sup>2</sup> Prefatory Remarks to the *Catalogue of the Educational Series*.

in the world of social and political life. It was with such thoughts surging in his brain and such feelings burning in his heart that he had gone, in this summer of 1860, to the mountains; and there, under the same "cloudless peace of the snows of Chamouni" that had inspired and sanctified his earlier essays in art, he now turned his mind to theories of national wealth and social justice. Into these essays Ruskin put the results of much long and earnest thought, and to them he brought all the resources of a now matured and chastened style. Every word of *Unto this Last* was written out twice, he tells us, and "in great part of the book, three times."<sup>1</sup> His views ran counter to accepted beliefs, and he expected reprobation; but he looked for the sympathy of friends, and, from the world at large, for at least a serious hearing.

By the end of June Ruskin had his first essay, or perhaps more, ready for the printer, and he offered it to the new magazine—the *Cornhill*. He sent the paper to Mr. Smith Williams, the literary adviser of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., warning him that editorial "notes of reprobation" might be necessary, but desiring "to get it into print, somehow." A copy was sent at the same time by Ruskin to his father. When others attacked his son, the father's combative instincts were aroused; yet his support was given with a heavy heart and a doubtful mind. The essays were accepted, and the first of them appeared in the August number of the Magazine. The following notes from Ruskin's father to Mrs. John Simon disclose the old city-merchant's anxiety:—

"7 BILLITER STREET, 21st July, 1860.—I addressed just now the August *Cornhill Magazine*—not out, but obtained by favour—to Mr. Simon. John was obliged to put 'J. R.,' as the Editor would not be answerable for opinions so opposed to Malthus and the *Times* and the City of Manchester. Please tell Mr. Simon I begged of John to spare his brain and write nothing for a year or two, but he said it only amused him and gave no thought, as it was a subject long thought of."

"DENMARK HILL, 25th October, 1860.—I send you the *Cornhill*

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 48.

CHAP. *Magazine*, finding John's paper liked by Mr. Simon. Early in July, I. John sent me from abroad his first paper, kindly saying I might suppress it if the publishing it would annoy me. I sent to Smith and Co., saying I thought them twelve of the most important pages I had ever read. Immediately on seeing them in print, Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh, a good writer and able reviewer, wrote to me, wondering I had published the article, and saying the *Scotsman* had fallen on this *unlucky* paper. I replied I meant to publish any more that might come, let Scotch or English reviews say what they might; and I am glad these speculations have gone out, though I confess to have suffered more uneasiness about his newspaper letters on Politics and his papers on Political Economy than about all his books. These Political and Political Economical papers throw up a coarser and more disagreeable dust about one. The wrath of the Manchester School will be delivered in worse terms than the anger of certain Schools of Painting."

These shrewd apprehensions were abundantly fulfilled. The publication of the papers in the *Cornhill Magazine* raised a storm of indignant protest; even a theological heresy-hunt could not have been more fast and furious. The essays were declared to be "one of the most melancholy spectacles, intellectually speaking, that we have ever witnessed."<sup>1</sup> "The series of papers in the *Cornhill Magazine*," wrote another critic,<sup>2</sup> "throughout which Mr. Ruskin laboured hard to destroy his reputation, were to our mind almost painful. It is no pleasure to see genius mistaking its power, and rendering itself ridiculous." The papers were described by the *Saturday Review* as "eruptions of windy hysterics," "absolute nonsense," "utter imbecility," "intolerable twaddle"; the author was "a perfect paragon of blubbering"; his "whines and snivels" were contemptible; the world was not going to be "preached to death by a mad governess." The last passage of the book in particular filled the *Saturday* reviewer with indignant disgust. Let us hear the passage, for the author considered it one of the best he ever wrote, and it has reached many a mind and touched

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Gazette*, Nov. 3, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Lancaster, *Essays and Reviews*, p. 299.



many a heart. He had been pleading for wiser consumption, for fairer distribution, for a more thoughtful direction of labour, for a simpler mode of life, and then continued thus:—

CHAP.  
I.

“And if, on due and honest thought over these things, it seems that the kind of existence to which men are now summoned by every plea of pity and claim of right, may, for some time at least, not be a luxurious one;—consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw clearly at our sides the suffering which accompanies it in the world. Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. Raise the veil boldly; face the light; and if, as yet, the light of the eye can only be seen through tears, and the light of the body through sackcloth, go thou forth weeping, bearing precious seed, until the time come, and the kingdom, when Christ’s gift of bread, and bequest of peace, shall be ‘Unto this last as unto thee’; and when, for earth’s severed multitudes of the wicked and the weary, there shall be holier reconciliation than that of the narrow home, and calm economy, where the Wicked cease—not from trouble, but from troubling—and the Weary are at rest.”

“Even more repulsive,” said the *Saturday* reviewer, “is the way in which Mr. Ruskin writes of the relations of the rich and poor.” It was incredible that anybody should listen to such appeals, except that “people like for some reason to see a man degrade himself.”

Ruskin himself was not a man to be browbeaten by such bludgeoning; but the attack was carried, in newspapers all over the country, into a more vulnerable quarter. What did Thackeray mean by committing himself to such nonsense?<sup>1</sup> What was Mr. Smith thinking of when he admitted into a magazine, which had still to establish itself in popular favour, such loud attacks on the popular creed? The blow

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, October 2, 1860: “For some inscrutable reason, which must be inscrutably satisfactory to his publishers, Mr.

Thackeray has allowed,” etc., etc.; and the *Scotsman*, August 9: “If Mr. Thackeray had not failed to feel ashamed to print such frenzies,” etc., etc.



CHAP. I. went home; and after three of the essays had been published, the conductors of the *Cornhill Magazine* bowed before the storm. Ruskin afterwards told the story in the Preface to *Munera Pulveris*, where he describes how the editor's sentence of excommunication was conveyed "with great discomfort to himself, and many apologies to me." Though the editor was the vehicle of communication, it appears from the Memoir of Mr. George Smith that the edict was the publisher's. Ruskin's papers were "seen," we are told, "to be too deeply tainted with socialistic heresy to conciliate subscribers," and Mr. Smith decided to stop "so dangerous a contributor."<sup>1</sup> The intimation was conveyed to Ruskin after the receipt of the third paper, which appeared in October: the Magazine, he was informed, could admit only one Economical Essay more, which, accordingly, he made (by permission) longer than the rest. Also, stronger. "I'm so glad," he wrote to William Ward on October 1, "you like those economy papers. The *next* will be a smasher,—I'm only afraid they won't put it in. If they don't, I'll print it separate."

Ruskin had faith in the ultimate vindication of his essays; but at the time the stoppage of them in the *Cornhill*, and the violent reprobation with which they were received, caused him much disappointment and bitterness of spirit. Eighteen months later (June 1862) he collected the essays, unaltered, but with an added preface, into a separate volume. The book not only sold very slowly itself, but its heresies checked the sale of his other books also. "It *will* sell, some day, yet, you'll see," he wrote to his father (Mornex, Oct. 20, 1862); "but is there absolutely no sale yet? It is enough to make one turn knave and try to make money by bad writing." One word of encouragement, indeed, he received, and it was from the man whose good opinion he most valued. He seems to have sent an "advance" copy of the last essay to Carlyle, who replied thus:—

"CHELSEA, October 29, 1860.—You go down through those unfortunate dismal-science people like a treble-X of Senna, Glauber,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplementary Volume I. p. xxvii.

and Aloes ; like a fit of British cholera, threatening to be fatal ! CHAP. I.  
I have read your paper with exhilaration, exultation, often with laughter, with bravissimo ! Such a thing flung suddenly into half a million dull British heads on the same day, will do a great deal of good. I marvel in parts at the lynx-eyed sharpness of your logic, at the pincer-grip (red-hot pincers) you take of certain bloated cheeks and blown-up bellies. More power to your elbow (though it is cruel in the extreme). If you dispose, stand to that kind of work for the next seven years, and work out then a result like what you have done in painting. . . .”

But other friends, whose opinion also Ruskin valued, were unsympathetic. Dr. John Brown, as we have heard, remonstrated with Ruskin's father for allowing such doctrine to see the light. His old tutor, the Rev. W. L. Brown, was coldly critical, and Ruskin, in a letter of expostulation and defence, confessed himself to be “wild with contempt and anger.”

### III

Such was the mood in which Ruskin passed the winter of 1860–61. He had returned from Switzerland in September and rendered account of himself to his friends :—

(To LADY TREVELYAN.) “DENMARK HILL, Oct. 1860.—I've just got my last incendiary production (for November) finally revised, and am in for a rest, I believe, which your letter begins pleasantly. My rest at home began badly, six weeks ago, by my mother's falling down the stairs in her dressing-room and breaking the thigh bone ; all has gone on since as well as could be ; and I did not write to tell you, because it was no use your being anxious for her and my father and me. The doctors say now the limb will be quite useful again. The worst of the thing has been the confinement, which my mother has, however, borne admirably (with the help, be it confessed, of some of the worst possible evangelical theology which she makes me read to her, and I'm obliged of course to make no disparaging remarks of an irritating character. You may conceive my state of mind after it !) . . . My father is pretty well—recovering from the shock which my mother's accident caused to him ; and contemplating my *Cornhill* gambols with a terrified

CHAP. I. complacency which is quite touching. *I'm* very poorly—philanthropy not agreeing with me, as you very properly say it shouldn't. The other thing suits me much better."

(*To C. E. NORTON.*) "Nov. 4.—I had your kind and delightful letter, with Lowell's, on Lake Lucerne, and waited till I could give some tolerable account of myself before answering it. Which time of tolerableness seems hardly likely to come at present, for I am resting now, and find myself in a general state of collapse. I hate the sight of pen and paper, and can't write so much as a note without an effort. I don't think about anything, and feel consequently like Nothing,—my chief sense of existence lately having been in thinking or trying to think. Stillman knows all about me and will tell you whatever you want to know. When I begin to think at all, I get into states of disgust and fury at the way the mob is going on (meaning by mob, chiefly Dukes, Crown Princes, and such like persons) that I choke; and have to go to the British Museum and look at Penguins till I get cool. I find Penguins at present the only comfort in life. One feels everything in the world so sympathetically ridiculous; one can't be angry when one looks at a Penguin. . . ."

Another resource was in drawing from the figure. He noticed in letters of a subsequent date that this practice seemed to have intensified his perceptions of natural beauty. "I cannot imagine how it is," he wrote from Lucerne (Oct. 16, 1861), "that I feel, or see, everything so much more beautiful than even when I was in Switzerland only last year. I suppose, though it did not seem much, the work on the figure which I had last winter was very good exercise for me." In the spring he had some lecturing engagements to perform. On April 2 he gave a discourse at the St. George's Mission; on April 19 he delivered at the Royal Institution the lecture on Tree Twigs. This lecture was, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> generally accounted a failure, and Ruskin felt it to be such himself. He was suffering already from some nervous depression, and the sense of failure in this public appearance increased his nervousness. He felt that it was time to take rest, and

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 533 n.

in the middle of June he went abroad. This was the beginning of a long exile which must be reserved for a separate chapter. The main cause of his depression was the failure, as it seemed, of his economical essays. He maintained friendly relations with Mr. Smith, the publisher, for many years, and a letter to Thackeray of December 1860 shows no sign of vexation. But in his heart he was bitterly disappointed at the stoppage of his papers in the Magazine, as afterwards at the ill-success of the book.

CHAP.  
I.

#### IV

To a modern reader, who turns to Ruskin's essays at a time when they have done their work, the excited hostility and violent apprehension caused by their original publication may seem barely intelligible. The heresies have become, in part, accepted doctrine, and, in the remainder, the familiar gospel of economic and political schools; if they were "socialistic," did not a distinguished statesman declare, with regard to the tendency of modern legislation, that "we are all socialists now"? But we must judge the matter historically, and put ourselves back to the state of public opinion in 1860, if we would either do justice to Ruskin's editor or appreciate correctly the importance of his own work. The "old" Political Economy was then at the height of its power. It was the established creed, and any man who assailed it was a heretic who could expect no mercy from its ministers. It was also the basis of an accepted policy. Its abstractions were taken as rules of conduct. The policy of *laissez faire* was still the accepted rule, as may be seen in speeches or leading articles of the time; and Ruskin was a heretic no less in advocating practical extensions of State interference than in attacking the theoretical basis of economic doctrine. The established creed was beginning to be undermined by other agencies; but Ruskin had not followed the rise of the "realistic" school of economics in Germany. He had even professed, as we have seen, in a rash (and not entirely accurate) avowal of which his critics were not



CHAP. I. slow to take advantage, not to have read the authors whom he was attacking.<sup>1</sup> His assault was entirely independent; and it was as trenchant as it was audacious. Herein was an additional source of aggravation. He was an intruder; let the cobbler stick to his last, and the author of *Modern Painters* to his art-criticism. What should an artist and a man of letters know of the mysteries of economics? This is a question which, in one form or another, fills a large part of the replies to Ruskin's essays. “Let him make but a very slight change in the title of his papers,” wrote one of the critics, “and it will suit them admirably; let him alter ‘Unto this Last’ into ‘Beyond the Last.’ We never knew a more signal violation of the good old rule *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*.”<sup>2</sup> “No man oftener than I,” Ruskin retorted at a later date, “has had cast in his teeth the favourite adage of the insolent and the feeble—*Ne sutor*. But it has always been forgotten by the speakers that, although the proverb might on some occasions be wisely spoken by an artist to a cobbler, it could never be wisely spoken by a cobbler to an artist.”<sup>3</sup> There is no reason why the exercise of singularly acute powers of analysis in one direction—and Mazzini said of Ruskin that he had “the most analytical mind in Europe”—should disqualify a man for their exercise in another. Political Economy demands great care and skill in the exact use of language; in no study are there more ambiguities and shibboleths to scatter confusion or excite prejudice. Ruskin, though among the most copious and eloquent of writers, was never intoxicated by the exuberance of his language; no English writer has ever used words with greater exactness and precision, and this habit was a valuable equipment for sword-exercise among the “masked words” of Political Economy. It should be remembered, too, that though Ruskin's main interests in the earlier portion of his life had been with art, he was familiar from his youth up with the ideas and practice of the

<sup>1</sup> *A Joy for Ever*, Pref. 1857. Ruskin's annotated copy of Mill's *Political Economy* may be seen in the British Museum (presented by Mrs. T. Thornton); where also

(presented by myself) is his annotated copy of Mill's *Liberty*.

<sup>2</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1860.

<sup>3</sup> Epilogue to *Arrows of the Chace* (1880).



mercantile world as they were to be observed in a city merchant's house. And, again, he claimed with justice that his first-hand knowledge of arts and crafts gave him a real insight into the finer qualities of work,<sup>1</sup> and a considerable advantage over many of the arm-chair economists; to which it may be added that he had used his opportunities of foreign travel to investigate closely the conditions of agriculture and national life.<sup>2</sup> Ruskin, therefore, was by no means so ill equipped, as his critics chose to assume, for the warfare which he carried into the camp of the established school of economics. But the intrusion of an art-critic into an alien field remained to the end one of the popular counts in the indictment against him.

Yet, even in the first fury of reprobation, there were some who feared, while they affected to despise. He is not worth our powder and shot, wrote one of the organs of the established schools; yet, if we do not crush him, "his wild words will touch the springs of action in some hearts, and ere we are aware a moral floodgate may fly open and drown us all."<sup>3</sup> Only the pen of Ruskin himself could do justice to the horror thus naïvely expressed lest an incursion of moral ideas should drown the whole scheme of the orthodox religion in economics. The fear was to be justified in good time. The history of *Unto this Last*—the little book, "the beginning of the days of Ruskin's reprobation"—is eloquent. The edition of 1862 consisted of 1000 copies, and ten years later it was still not exhausted. Ruskin preserved a curious correspondence which he had with Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co. in 1873, when he finally transferred the publication of his books to Mr. George Allen. Among this correspondence is a "List of Mr. Ruskin's Works of which Smith, Elder and Co. have copies on hand with the estimated time for the sale of the stock on hand." Of *Unto this Last*, 102 copies remained, and the publishers estimated that two years would be required to dispose of them. A few years later,

CHAP.  
I.

<sup>1</sup> *Munera Pulveris*, Preface, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> There are some acute remarks in this sense in Mr. J. A. Hobson's *John Ruskin*, *Social Reformer*, p. 58

<sup>3</sup> From a leading article in the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, October 2, 1860.

CHAP. I. Ruskin re-issued the book on his own account, and the rate of sale during the following thirty years was 2000 per annum. Ruskin was told of a working man who, being too poor to buy the book, had copied it out word for word.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently a selection of extracts, sold at a penny, was circulated widely among the working classes,<sup>2</sup> and the book has been translated into French, German, and Italian. It has contributed to the moralisation of Political Economy; to a still larger extent, it has influenced the thought of political parties and the course of political action. I shall have something to say on these points in a later chapter; but here I may cite an incidental illustration. When the Parliament of 1906 was elected, there was a great hubbub about the large contingent of Labour Members, and an ingenious journalist sent circulars to them asking them to state, What were the Books that had Influenced them? Some said one, and some another; but the book which appeared in the greatest number of lists was Ruskin's *Unto this Last*.<sup>3</sup> The "floodgate" has flown open.

## V

All this might have pleased Ruskin, had he lived to know it; but his days of health were over, and he died, before the full extent of his influence was discernible. "I believe these essays," he wrote of *Unto this Last* in 1862, "to be the best, that is to say, the truest, rightest-worded, and most serviceable things I have ever written." In reprinting the book, fifteen years later, he repeated, in other words, the same conviction. The book, he wrote again in 1864, is "quite unshakable by any quantity of abuse—and doing, little by little, and invulnerably, the work I meant it to do."<sup>4</sup> It is the book, he said elsewhere, "that will stand (if anything stand), surest and longest of all work of mine."<sup>5</sup> With Ruskin thought and style were inseparable; but he rated the literary art of *Unto this Last* very high also. "Its

<sup>1</sup> See *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 48 (Notes and Correspondence).

<sup>2</sup> *The Rights of Labour according to John Ruskin*, 1887.

<sup>3</sup> See *Review of Reviews*, June 1906.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to George Richmond.

<sup>5</sup> *Sesame and Lilies*, § 47.

language," he wrote to his father (Aug. 12, 1862), "is as much superior to that of the first volume of *Modern Painters*, as that of Tacitus to that of the Continental Annual." This was a point which Ruskin illustrated in some detail in the Oxford lecture recalled at the beginning of the present chapter. The lecture was so interesting a lesson in style that I shall give some further notes of it here. Ruskin began by reading to us a passage from *Modern Painters*—one often admired, and a favourite with compilers of Elegant Extracts:—

"He who has once stood beside the grave, to look upon the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love and the keen sorrow, to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust."

"Now, that is a true saying," he went on to say, "and in the measure of me at that day a sincere one. But with my present knowledge of literature I could tell in an instant that the person who wrote that *never had so stood beside the dead*. I could be perfectly sure of it, for two reasons—the first, that there was in the passage feeling, and the melody that comes of feeling, enough to show that the writer was capable of deep passion; and the second, that being so capable, if he had ever stood beside his dead before it was buried out of his sight, he would never, in speaking of the time, have studied how to put three *ds* one after another in *debt*, *discharged*, and *dust*." And then he read the concluding words of *Unto this Last*, which I have already quoted. He told us to note how much better in point of style it was than the earlier passage; chiefly because there was "no art of an impudently visible kind" in it, no word for which we could put another without loss to the sense. "It is true that *plea* and *pity* both begin with *p*, but *plea* is the right word, and there is no other which is in full and clear opposition to *claim*." Yet Ruskin was not wholly satisfied with the passage in *Unto this Last* even so. The reference to Tacitus in his letter points to a characteristic

CHAP. I. of the style; but there may be excess, and even affectation, he told us at Oxford, in concentration. He took the words—"Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent and exquisite; luxury for all and by the help of all." There, he said, is affectation! "Remains of my old bad trick of putting my words in braces, like game, neck to neck, and leaving the reader to untie them." And then he told us how he would revise the sentence now—"Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent, because granted to the need of all; and exquisite, because perfected by the aid of all." "You see," he said, "it has gained a little in melody in being put right, and gained a great deal in clearness." He went on with some other criticisms,<sup>1</sup> but, in spite of minor faults, pronounced the style of *Unto this Last* to be good—good in expression because earnest in temper and right in thought.

The author's judgment has been endorsed by a recent critic, who has made special study of Ruskin's style. "As a matter of form," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "I would point to *Unto this Last* as a work containing almost all that is noble in Ruskin's written prose, with hardly any, or very few, of his excesses and mannerisms. It is true that we have a single sentence of 242 words and 52 intermediate stops<sup>2</sup> before we come to the pause. But this is occasional; and the book as a whole is a masterpiece of pure, incisive, imaginative, lucid English. If one had to plead the cause of Ruskin before the Supreme Court in the Republic of Letters, one would rely on that book as a type of clearness, wit, eloquence, versatility, passion."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> They may be read in the Library Edition, vol. xxii. p. 515.

<sup>2</sup> See § 74 of the book.

<sup>3</sup> "Ruskin as Master of Prose" in *Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill, and other Literary Estimates*, p. 74. The same position is accorded to *Unto this Last* by another critic: "The volume marks the perfection, for practical purposes, of his style. It has shed the flamboyance and prolixity of his youth; it has not lapsed into the involved garrulity

—often delightful, indeed, but at best lacking the gravity of really great art—which alternately charms and irritates in his later essays. Here it is in his hands like the sword of an expert swordsman: keen, rapid, and lustrous, flashing with swift easy turns through impassioned pleading, succinct exposition, searching irony and fanciful humour" (J. W. Mackail in *Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature*, vol. iii. p. 571).



Mr. Harrison, in this passage and elsewhere in the same study, is severe on the length of Ruskin's sentences, and Mr. Mackail notices "the prolixity of his youth." Ruskin has quizzed himself on both points. "I am shorter breathed at sixty-three than I was at six-and-twenty," he said, in reviewing the second volume of *Modern Painters*; "and am obliged to help myself to a comfortable full-stop, before I can get on with my own sentence." And, again, with regard to the difference between his earlier and his later manner:—

"People used to call me a good writer then; now they say I can't write at all; because, for instance, if I think anybody's house is on fire, I only say, 'Sir, your house is on fire'; whereas formerly I used to say, 'Sir, the abode in which you probably passed the delightful days of youth is in a state of inflammation,' and everybody used to like the effect of the two p's in 'probably passed,' and of the two d's in 'delightful days.'"<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin's later style, in so far as it was rid of affectation, is clearly the better; yet for his long sentences, in so far as they were full and not merely prolix, is there not something to be said? Is the genius of the English language only, or best, to be seen in the short sentence? Ruskin was a master, at different times, both of the short sentence and of the long; but is the short phrase a greater accomplishment than the sustained melody? Ruskin's "long rolling sentences, with their triumphant rise and fall" have in them something of those ideas of infinity and continuity which are elements in his "Typical Beauty." And his mastery of the resources of English is shown, not more in epigram and irony, than in those "grand sentences, in which many clauses are co-ordinated, many lesser ideas balanced, many strands woven into one great tissue which comes from the writer's pen as from a loom."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 23 (1872).

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Mahaffy, *What have the Greeks done for Modern Civilization*, p. 89; and Mr. Chesterton's Introduction to an edition of

Ruskin's Poems in Routledge's "Muses Library." See also, for some remarks upon Ruskin as a master of the periodic style, J. H. Fowler's *Nineteenth Century Prose*, pp. 111-112.



## CHAPTER II

### EXILE

(1861-1863)

“Disappointment’s dry and bitter root,  
    . . . . . and the choking pool  
Of the world’s scorn, are the right mother-milk  
To the tough hearts that pioneer their kind.”—LOWELL.

CHAP. II. RUSKIN quoted these lines from *Columbus* in the last chapter of *Modern Painters*, and quoted them to dispute. “My dear friend and teacher,” he said, “right as he is in almost everything, is for once wrong in these lines, though with a noble wrongness. . . . Love and trust are the only mother-milk of any man’s soul. So far as he is hated and mistrusted, his powers are destroyed.” The fate of his papers *Unto this Last* gave Ruskin taste of the dry and bitter root, and brought him to the choking pool. From the middle of June 1861 to the end of 1863, he exiled himself from home; and, except for a few brief visits to England, he lived the life of a recluse in France or Switzerland. Before passing to give account, in the next chapter, of the external events in his life during this period, I must endeavour to trace from his letters and diaries the inner currents of his mind. His mood of despondency must be explained, but it should not be exaggerated. To many friends and companions, and in congenial society, Ruskin was still as gay as ever. “I never saw him,” wrote his father to Professor Norton at this time, “less than cheerful in society, and when Carlyle comes to see him, and with some ladies, and a few favourite children, his spirits are exuberant.” He spent many happy and merry days, for instance, at Winnington Hall, then occupied by a girls’ school under Miss Bell; we shall hear of Winnington again when we come to the book—*The Ethies of the Dust*—

to which it forms the background. Nor, during his period of exile and despondency, did Ruskin cut himself off from helpful sympathy with friends and workers at home. It was during this period that he became acquainted, for instance, with Mr. Frederic Shields. "To Ruskin's teaching," he said, "I owe both as man and artist a debt of inexpressible and reverential gratitude."<sup>1</sup>

## I

The disappointment, which has been described already, was deepened in its effect by other causes of melancholy. The foundations of Ruskin's religious faith had been shaken; the tenements which had held the hopes and beliefs of his youth and early manhood had proved too narrow; he was stretching forth to a wider, and, as he felt, a nobler conception of human life and destiny, but the transition was through much travail of soul. "It is a difficult thing," he wrote to his father (Bonneville, Sunday, Sept. 29, 1861), "to live without hope of another world, when one has been used to it for forty years. But by how much the more difficult, by so much it makes one braver and stronger." And so, again; to Professor Norton (July 12, 1860): "It may be much *nobler* to hope for the advance of the human race only than for one's own and their immortality; much less selfish to look upon one's self merely as a leaf on a tree than as an independent spirit, but it is much less pleasant." Ruskin, it must be remembered, had been brought up as a Bible Christian, in the straitest school of literal interpretation; but he had also become deeply versed in some branches of natural science, and the truths of science seemed inconsistent with the literal words of Scripture. Already in 1851 he had written to Acland:—

"You speak of the Flimsiness of your own faith. Mine, which was never strong, is being beaten into mere gold leaf, and flutters in weak rags from the letter of its old forms; but the only letters it can hold by at all are the old Evangelical formulæ. If only the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Bookman*, October 1908.

CHAP. II. Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful Hammers ! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses."

In 1862 Bishop Colenso began the publication of his *Pentateuch Critically Examined*. At the present day when the Church of England, and in a lesser degree Christian societies of other denominations, have accepted the doctrine of progressive revelation and other formulas of accommodation, it may not be easy to understand the immense sensation which was caused by Colenso's work. But at the time the foundations of the deep seemed to be unloosed. Ruskin perceived from the first that the Bishop's case was unanswerable. He knew Colenso personally, and admired in equal measure the force of his logic and of his courage. In the collection of minerals in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington there is a large diamond which bears this inscription:—

The Colenso Diamond  
Presented in 1887 by John Ruskin  
In Honour of his Friend, the loyal  
And patiently adamantine  
First Bishop of Natal.

"Is all that true?" Colenso had asked himself, as he began translating the book of Genesis into the Zulu language. "My heart," he said, "answered, in the words of the Prophet, Shall a man speak lies in the name of the Lord? I dared not do so." Here was a man after Ruskin's own heart. His letters, as also many passages in his books, show the keen interest which he took in the Colenso Question:—

(To SIR JOHN NAESMYTH.) "Nov. 15, 1862. . . . One great worry is over and settled, and in a way which Lady Naesmyth and you will be mightily sorry for. You will soon hear—if you have not heard—of the Bishop of Natal's book. Now for the last four years I've been working in the same direction alone, and was quite unable to tell any one what I was about—and saw it was of no use—but it forced me to be quite alone—I could not speak of anything,

because all things have their root in that, and when you or any of my friends used to speak to me as if I was what I had been, it worried me. And the solitude was terrible—and the discoveries and darknesses terriblest—and all to be done alone.”

(To PROF. H. STORY MASKELYNE.) “*Jan. 1, 1863.*—Many Happy New Years to you—and unwearied eyes—and every possible felicity of cleavage to fortune. I believe these three wishes will be brought to you by the Bishop of Natal, who may be glad to refresh himself with a little secure geology after the sandy study of Theology. Seriously, I shall be grateful to you if you can give Dr. Colenso any kind of help in research—or in sympathy. No man has, in these days, a harder battle to fight—or fewer allies—or a better cause, or a truer heart.”

(To C. H. SPURGEON.) “*Nov. 25, 1862.*—MY DEAR FRIEND,—I want a chat with you. Is it possible to get it,—quietly,—and how, and where, and when? I’ll come to you,—or you shall come here,—or whatever you like. I am in England only for ten days,—being too much disgusted with your goings on—*yours* as much as everybody else’s—to be able to exist among you any longer. But I want to say ‘Good-bye’ before going to my den in the Alps.—Ever, with sincerest remembrances to Mrs. Spurgeon, affectionately yours.”

Ruskin had often sat at the feet of Spurgeon,<sup>1</sup> and saw much of him in private life. One would like to have a report of their conversations, but such exists only in Spurgeon’s memoirs, and he takes care to let the heretic dog have the worst of it.<sup>2</sup>

Among his friends, then, Ruskin made no secret of his firm adherence to Colenso’s heresies; but he yearned to do more, and yet was prevented. On a visit to Mrs. La Touche in Ireland (1861), he had spoken to her on the subject, and she had made him promise to leave time for a possible re-conversion and to commit himself to no

<sup>1</sup> There is a cartoon of Ruskin in that attitude in *Punch* for March 28, 1857, and it is stated that Ruskin “sent a cheque to Mr. Spurgeon, after hearing him

preach, for 100 guineas towards the fund for building a new place of worship.”

<sup>2</sup> See *C. H. Spurgeon, an Autobiography*, vol. iii. p. 195.



CHAP. published avowal of his "infidelity" for a space of ten  
II. years:—

(*To his Father.*) "MORNEX, Feb. 26, 1863.—Going down to Geneva with your letter to-day, I got yours of the 23rd—with various enclosures and expression of rejoicing in my promise to Mrs. La Touche. I am very glad you are glad of it—it was not one I would have given for money, nor for Turners (which I value much more than money), but it was the only thing I could do for Mrs. La Touche, and she would do all she *could* for me."

(*To the same.*) "WINNINGTON, Dec. 15, 1863.—Three years ago, long before Colenso was heard of, I had definitely refused to have anything more to do with the religious teaching in this school: my promises to Mrs. La Touche would never have been made if I had thought it likely any such stir would be caused thus early, as Colenso has excited, but I was *then* far beyond the point at which he is standing now."

Wherever Ruskin thought and felt strongly, his instinct was to write strongly also; and thus to the break from his old religious moorings was added the pain of self-suppression.

This unsettlement was accompanied by some physical weakness. His domestic letters at this period tell of much nervous exhaustion, and of the various ills of dyspepsia and depression to which men of letters are subject. Something must be allowed, too, in understanding his present mood, to the uncertainty of aim which had come over him. Hitherto he had at each turn felt an imperious call to some immediate work; but now he had finished *Modern Painters*, and his Economical essays had been cut short. "It seems to me," wrote his father, whose shrewdness was seldom at fault, "to be as much a want of purpose as a want of Health. He has done a great deal, but thinks he has done little, and all to little purpose. He was somewhat wearied with work, and I think is just beginning to get wearied with want of work and with not exactly knowing what to turn to next." Ruskin felt this himself. "I find it wonderfully difficult," he wrote to Acland, "to



know what to do with myself. If only a little round-headed cherub would tumble down through the clouds and tree-branches every morning to everybody with an express order to do so and so tied under his wing, one would be more comfortable.”

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II.

## II

But neither Ruskin's father nor his friends could fully understand the inmost causes of his mood. His was the soul of a Prophet consumed with wrath against a wayward and perverse generation; but his, also, the heart of a lover of his fellow-men, filled with pity for the miseries and follies of mankind. Ruskin's mother deplored the growing gloom of her son. "My mother asks me," he wrote (Bonneville, Oct. 10, 1861), "if I remember Marmon-tel's tale of the Misanthrope. Yes, very well; but I am no Misanthrope, only a disappointed Philanthropist—a much more difficult kind of person to deal with." His father talked lightly of the liver as the cause of all evil, and rallied his son—surrounded as he was with so many good things, and possessed of so many shining talents—for torturing himself in vain. Peace he sometimes found, but it was only by closing his ears, and then the sounds of human misery pierced through. "The peace in which I am at present," he wrote from Mornex to Professor Norton (March 10, 1863), "is only as if I had buried myself in a tuft of grass on a battlefield wet with blood, for the cry of the earth about me is in my ears continually if I did not lay my head to the very ground. The folly and horror of humanity enlarge to my eyes daily." But a letter to his father, written a little later, gives the best account of Ruskin's mood:—

"MORNEX, *May* 16, 1863.—I have your two kind letters of the 13th (with the money, best thanks), which I like very much. The long argumentative one is very nice, and I shall keep it, thinking it one of your truly admirable letters and entirely well reasoned throughout, and most wonderful as a piece of bye-work, with all the rest of your business on your hands. It is entirely well

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reasoned, I say, though misapplied, because you cannot at present conceive the state of my mind. If written to a discontented and foolish youth, the letter would be perfect; written to a man who is at one in every point and tone of thought with Dante and Virgil, and who is discontented precisely as they are—and, in a lower degree, as Jeremiah and Elijah were—the letter has nothing to do with his mind and work. There is no more chaos in my mind than there was in Hesiod's or Virgil's, but you will find neither of them were happy men. The happiest life in the world is probably a caterpillar's or a duck's; they have no 'imagination,' no fears, and no regrets; and their desires being merely of eatable dirt, are easily and constantly satisfied. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness may perhaps some day be filled; but their larder is ill supplied for the present, and an eagle or dog have anxiety, effort, and sorrow, just in proportion to their power and sagacity. . . . You never have been able to understand my feeling about Turners. I so little desire their possession that I would give every one I have to the National Gallery to-morrow, if I thought they would be safe there. I desire their safety, as I desire that of Chartres Cathedral. I don't want to buy the Cathedral; but I want to be able to see it and to know it is safe. Cannot you fancy what it is to me—now that Windus' Collection is all scattered—never to be able to refer to a single drawing out of my own possession of the Yorkshire, the Southern Coast, the Scottish Series, and the Englands—having only one in forty or so of each—and to know that all the rest are to be hawked up and down, faded and destroyed, and that I might, if I had not been self-denying, have had *every one* now safe and sound, in my own possession, and the magnificent position and power they would have given me in society, and the power of placing them and giving them where they would have been serviceable?

“But this regret is all nothing—compared to the sense of indignation which burns me continually, for all that men are doing and suffering, and *this* I can only escape by keeping out of sight of it. This grief is no more biliousness than the Lamentations of Jeremiah were biliousness, or, as I said, Virgil's ‘*Res Romanæ perituraque regna.*’ It is just because I am so clear-sighted, so just, and in many respects so unselfish, that I suffer in this way.

There are not two men in the Parliament of England who would not be more angry if the Emperor of Russia stopped their partridge-shooting than if he murdered every soul in his dominions.<sup>1</sup> These men are far happier than I. But they are neither better nor wiser. Depend upon it, though crime and folly bring grief, Wisdom and Knowledge bring it also. In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. There has been one man upon the earth of whom we believe, or profess to believe, that he knew all things, and did no sin. Of him it is recorded that he sorrowed constantly, fasted often, wept, and agonised. But it is only *once* said that he rejoiced, and all his followers, if they are true ones, find the *Cross* no light burden, though the Yoke is; they find rest and resurrection, but the rest must be found on Golgotha."

### III

There were heights and depths in Ruskin's nature where his father, shrewd and sympathetic as he was within the limits of his reach, could not follow; and a growing sense of estrangement from the parents, who throughout his life had been also his companions, was a factor which added perhaps the bitterest element to the son's gloom. Ruskin was forty-two, but he was still under a kind of parental discipline. The reader may perhaps have noticed as significant a passage in the preceding chapter where Ruskin's father records the receipt of a letter from Dr. John Brown "wondering I had published the article"—"I" being the father, the article being the son's. It seems to have been accepted as the natural thing that Ruskin, now one of the great writers of the day, should be under a domestic censorship. His goings and comings, his absences and his visits, were similarly subjected to parental supervision. I expect that he most often got his own way; and sometimes when he yielded it was only for consideration received. A letter to his father of March 1861 gives a droll illustration. Ruskin was staying at Winnington, when an invitation came to visit Lord Palmerston and Mr. and Mrs. Cowper

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the Polish insurrection: see *Sesame and Lilies*, § 29.

CHAP. Temple at Broadlands. Ruskin did not want to go, he was  
 II. happy where he was; his father, who loved his son to mix among great personages, was insistent that he should throw over Winnington and go to Lord Palmerston. Ruskin grumbled, but was willing to strike a bargain:—

“If you are really set upon it, give me four more of Griffith’s or Mrs. Cooper’s sketches [by Turner] for the four days I lose—and I’ll leave on Thursday, and go on to Broadlands on Friday and come up to town with them on Monday. . . . I don’t think it is the least necessary to accept *every* invitation one gets from that kind of people. They’ll think twice as much of me if I don’t go this time, and ask me again all the sooner. You had much better take me at my word, and let me stay here as I intended till Monday. If you make up your mind to-morrow morning about this, send me telegram what I’m to do.”<sup>1</sup>

His amusements had been supervised as closely as his movements. He was looking admiringly one day at a sturdy British workman wielding a pickaxe, and said to Mr. Allen, who was with him, “My parents debarred me from all exercise but walking. They wouldn’t let me ride lest I should be thrown; boating was dangerous because I might be drowned; and boxing my mother thought a vulgar form of exercise.” Ruskin, by the way, took some interest in “the noble art,” and was much excited, like the rest of the world, in the famous international fight between Heenan and Sayers (April 1860). Ruskin’s assistant, Mr. Butterworth, promised shortly afterwards to introduce the English champion to the Working Men’s College, and Mr. Allen

<sup>1</sup> By the intervention of “Fors,” as Ruskin might have said, a letter from his father to a friend in Edinburgh comes into my possession while I am revising this chapter for press. “John was down a fortnight ago,” writes the proud father, “by special invitation of Lord and Lady Palmerston at Broadlands from Friday to Monday. Lord P. found him at station and took him in his own

railway carriage. He has a small chariot for himself, but he took John to Romsey to church, and on Monday took him to railway and in his carriage up again. There was a great deal of company, but the kindness of Lord and Lady P. was extreme. I did not think his Lordship likely to ask John nor that he was likely to go, but I am glad he went.”



was instructed to bring some wine from the choicest bin at Denmark Hill "to drink Tom Sayers's health." But Mr. Butterworth had either over-estimated his influence with the great man, or had been teasing his master; all he brought to the College was a portrait of Sayers, and great was Ruskin's disappointment; though, if the portrait were a good one, the Greek pose of Sayers, which William Allingham so much admired,<sup>1</sup> would have pleased Ruskin. It is an ill wind, etc.; and Mr. Allen was ordered to take the wine to Turner's old housekeeper, Mrs. Booth. In the matter of exercise, Ruskin sometimes slipped the chain; and, with Mr. Allen as accomplice sworn to secrecy, he would indulge in evening rows on the Thames. The nervousness and pride of Ruskin's parents in respect of their son were curiously morbid. Mr. Allen remembered an occasion when Ruskin's father was in a sorry state of alarm because his son had gone with Gambart, the picture-dealer, to the Canterbury Music Hall; and a lecture which Ruskin had promised to give to an audience of working-men had to be abandoned because his parents considered that his presence in the East End would be dangerous and undignified.

Ruskin's deference to his parents was always graciously rendered in public, and the subjection was for many years yielded from the heart; but as the bond of intellectual sympathy became weaker, as the control turned into a dead-weight upon the interests and work on which his heart and mind were set, the closeness of the tie was found to be galling. The father was a respecter of received opinions; was jealous, too, for his son's reputation; and was afraid of what might happen if he confessed his religious doubts or repeated his economic heresies:—

(*To his Father.*) "MILAN, July 22, 1862.—I have your letter stating receipt of second part of paper. I am quite content that you should do anything with it that you like in your present state of health, but as far as mine is concerned the one *only* thing you can do for me is to let me follow out my work in my own way and in peace. All interference with me torments me and makes me

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<sup>1</sup> *William Allingham: A Diary*, p. 85.



CHAP. quite as ill as any amount of work. . . . I don't mind if it does  
 II. you any good to stop the paper—only, don't think of me in such matters—the one only thing I can have is liberty."

The state of the case was exposed in letters to some intimate friends :—

(*To* LADY TREVELYAN.) "MILAN, *July* 20, 1862. . . . I know my father is ill, but I cannot stay at home just now, or should fall indubitably ill myself, also, which would make him worse. He has more pleasure if I am able to write to him a cheerful letter than generally when I'm there—for we disagree about all the Universe, and it vexes him, and much more than vexes me. If he loved me less, and believed in me more, we should get on ; but his whole life is bound up in me, and yet he thinks me a fool—that is to say, he is mightily pleased if I write anything that has big words and no sense in it, and would give half his fortune to make me a member of Parliament if he thought I would talk, provided only the talk hurt nobody and was all in the papers. This form of affection galls me like hot iron, and I am in a subdued fury whenever I am at home, which dries all the marrow out of every bone in me. Then he hates all my friends (except you), and I have had to keep them all out of the house. . . ."

(*To* C. E. NORTON.) "DENMARK HILL, *Feb.* 25, 1861. . . . I was seriously, and despairingly, thinking of going to Paris or Venice and breaking away from all modern society and opinion, and doing I don't know what. Intense scorn of all I had hitherto done or thought, still intenser scorn of other people's doings and thinkings, especially in religion ; the perception of colossal power more and more in Titian and of weakness in purism, and almost unendurable solitude in my own home, only made more painful to me by parental love which did not and never could help me, and which was cruelly hurtful without knowing it ; and terrible discoveries in the course of such investigation as I made into grounds of old faith—were all concerned in this : and it would have been, but for the pain which I could not resolve to give my parents. I don't in the least know what might have been the end of it, if a little child (only thirteen last summer) hadn't put her fingers on the helm at the right time, and chosen to make a pet of herself for

me, and her mother to make a friend of herself . . . certainly the ablest and I think the best woman I have ever known. . . .

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“So there’s a letter—about myself and nothing else. I wonder I have the face to send it, but you know you asked me once to write you a sort of account of the things that made me, as you were pleased to say, ‘what I am,’ which is at present an entirely puzzled, helpless, and disgusted old gentleman. As for things that have influenced me, I believe hard work, love of justice and of beauty, good nature and great vanity, have done all of me that was worth doing. I’ve had my heart broken, ages ago, when I was a boy—then mended, cracked, beaten in, kicked about old corridors, and finally, I think, flattened fairly out. I’ve picked up what education I’ve got in an irregular way—and it’s very little. I suppose that on the whole as little has been got into me and out of me as under any circumstances was probable; it is true, had my father made me his clerk I might have been in a fair way of becoming a respectable Political Economist in the manner of Ricardo or Mill—but granting liberty and power of travelling, and working as I chose, I suppose everything I’ve chosen to have been about as wrong as wrong could be. I ought not to have written a word; but should have merely waited on Turner as much as he would have let me, putting in writing every word that fell from him, and drawing hard. By this time, I might have been an accomplished draughtsman, a fair musician, and a thoroughly good scholar in art literature, and in good health besides. As it is, I’ve written a few second-rate books, which nobody minds; I can’t draw, I can’t play nor sing, I can’t ride, I walk worse and worse, I can’t digest. And I can’t help it.—There! Good-bye, love to your mother and sisters.”

The little child who had made a pet of herself was the Rosie La Touche of an earlier chapter. “From this time,” he says in some autobiographical notes, “a new epoch of life began for me in this wise, that my father and mother could travel with me no more, but Rose, in heart, was with me always, and all I did was for her sake.” Though she was not yet fourteen, she was already beginning to fill a part of the place in Ruskin’s affections which had hitherto been occupied almost exclusively by his parents.

## CHAPTER III

### BOULOGNE—LUCERNE—MILAN

(1861-1862)

“How differently young and old are affected by the words of some classic author, such as Homer or Horace. Passages, which to a boy are but rhetorical commonplaces, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer might supply, which he gets by heart and thinks very fine, and imitates, as he thinks, successfully, in his own flowing versification, at length come home to him, when long years have passed, and he has had experience of life, and pierce him as if he had never before known them, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness.”—NEWMAN.

#### I

It was in the middle of June 1861 that Ruskin started for his long period of self-ordained exile. Before leaving home he performed an act of self-denial which signified the consecration of his energies to other than artistic pursuits. He stripped himself of many of his treasured drawings by Turner, and presented them to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The collection of Turners which his father had amassed for him at Denmark Hill was by this time, as Ruskin had said to Lord Palmerston,<sup>1</sup> one of the richest in the country. The prices paid for them, though they often shocked the old Scottish merchant, will seem almost incredibly small to collectors of the present day. The drawing of “Winchelsea,” given to Ruskin on his twenty-first birthday, had cost forty guineas. The next acquisition—“Harlech”—was bought at the price of some bitterness. Ruskin and his father were at an Exhibition. Griffith, the dealer, came up and told Ruskin that the drawing was for sale. “I’ll

take it then," said he, without so much as a glance at his father, and without first asking the price. Griffith fixed it at seventy guineas. There was mingled grief and scorn on the face of Ruskin's father, who, rightly or wrongly, was convinced that Griffith had put on twenty pounds at the instant. It was partly suspicion of the dealer that caused the father to hold back when there was an opportunity in 1842, as already related,<sup>1</sup> of securing, at reasonable prices, several of Turner's later and most beautiful drawings. Some that Ruskin most coveted were obtained by Munro of Novar. "Would give the world for them," wrote Ruskin in his diary, after a visit to Mr. Munro's house. The phrase was not mere hyperbole. Pictures, as he once wrote to his father from Venice, were not dead things to him:—

(*Jan.* 28, 1852.)—"Men are more evanescent than pictures, yet one sorrows for lost friends, and pictures *are* my friends. I have none others. I am never long enough with men to attach myself to them; and whatever feelings of attachment I have are to material things. If the great Tintoret here were to be destroyed, it would be precisely to me what the death of Hallam was to Tennyson—as far as *this* world is concerned—with an addition of bitterness and indignation, for *my* friend would perish murdered, *his* by a natural death. Hearing of plans for its restoration is just the same to me as to another man hearing talk behind an Irish hedge of shooting his brother. . . ."

And of Turner's genius, then comparatively little known or understood, he felt that he, and perhaps he alone, was rightly appreciative. "The pleasure of a new Turner to me," he wrote in *Præterita*, "nobody ever will understand, and it's no use talking of it." But he was careful from time to time to try and make his father understand. "I am *content* with my collection *now*," he wrote (*Jan.* 23, 1852), "but the exquisite pleasure that every new one gives me is like a year added to my life and a permanent extension of the sphere of life." Ruskin's appeals, or the growing prosperity of his father's business, or both causes combined,

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 126.



CHAP. must have relaxed the purse-strings, for the Turner collection  
 III. at Denmark Hill grew apace, and in 1860 it numbered two oil-pictures and more than a hundred drawings and sketches. "When one got Ruskin," said Dr. Furnivall, "to show his Turners to charming women like Mrs. William Cowper (Lady Mount-Temple), Lady Goderich (Marchioness of Ripon), Mrs. Charles Buxton (once Emily Holland), and the like, it was indeed a pleasure to see him and them: the pictures had on those days fresh colour and fresh light."<sup>1</sup> On days when Ruskin was away from home or especially busy, Mr. Allen would be told off to show the treasures to visitors. "There was one of his Turners," Mr. Allen related, "which Mr. Ruskin was not proud of. He used to say to me, 'Don't show it, or if you do, tell them it's a bad one.' This was the 'Rochester.' 'My father gave it to me once,' said Mr. Ruskin, 'just to bring me home a fortnight earlier from abroad, and it's the worst Turner I have.'"<sup>2</sup> Another anecdote of Mr. Allen's illustrates the painter's desire to see his drawings kept together, and the son's disappointment at his father's backwardness in buying. "One day," Ruskin told Mr. Allen, "Turner came to me with a bundle in a dirty piece of brown paper under his arm. It contained the whole of his drawings for the *Rivers of France*. 'You shall have the whole series, John,' said he, 'unbroken, for twenty-five guineas apiece.' And my father actually thought I was mad to want them!" Ruskin never quite overcame the feeling of estrangement which these disappointments engendered; and the old city merchant himself would have been sorely vexed had he lived to realise how for once his shrewdness was at fault, and what a fine investment he had in this case missed. Some years later Ruskin paid £1000 for seventeen of the sixty-two drawings. These seventeen, with twenty-three others, Ruskin now presented to the University of Oxford. At the same time he gave twenty-five Turner drawings to Cambridge. The Oxford collection is especially fine, and deserves to be better known. The notice of the

<sup>1</sup> "Forewords" to the privately-printed volume (1890), *Two Letters concerning "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds."*

<sup>2</sup> "Ruskin and his Books," in the *Strand Magazine*, Dec. 1902.

motion of acceptance and thanks in Convocation describes Ruskin's object in making the gifts: "Whereas John Ruskin, M.A., honorary student of Christ Church, having, with great care and at great expense, formed a choice and valuable collection of drawings by the late J. M. W. Turner, R.A., and believing that such works, being made accessible to students, may produce very beneficial results, desires to present the greater part of this collection as a free gift to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University of Oxford, to be placed in the custody of the Curators of the University Galleries," etc., etc. The gift was not of that which involved no self-denial. "When I gave away my Loire series of Turner drawings to Oxford," he said afterwards, "I thought I was rational enough to enjoy them as much in the University Gallery as in my own study. But not at all! I find I can't bear to look at them in the gallery, because they are 'mine' no more."<sup>1</sup>

## II

Having thus divested himself of some of his most cherished possessions, Ruskin went abroad and settled himself for seven weeks at Boulogne. This was a period of complete rest, or of such approach to it as was possible to Ruskin. In a piece of autobiography intended for the continuation of *Præterita* there is account of the interests which occupied him:—

"I stayed at Boulogne instead of going on to the Alps, taking a little bedroom and parlour under the sandhills north of the pier, and set myself to watch sea and sky, Rose writing to me every week punctually, and Emily sometimes interlining a word or two, leaning over her shoulder. . . . I had given up learning Greek by Gordon's, I finally think, quite wise advice, and Latin, because I hated Lucretius, and was teased by Tacitus. But now, when Rose began to ask me questions about her Greek Testament, and the thoughts I had first expressed in *Unto this Last* could receive

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 62 (1876).

CHAP. support from Homer and Xenophon and Horace, it was needful  
 III. for such purpose at least to make what verbal knowledge I had, sound. I took the bit in my teeth, sent for my Plato to Boulogne, with Xenophon's *Economist*, and Horace, and read sometimes not more than a line a day of each, but that as perfectly as grammar and dictionary would do it. Gradually I gained real scholarship in pure plain Greek and in lyric Latin. I cannot translate a Greek chorus, nor do I know the force of the words used by Plato and Horace in every other writer; but I know what Plato and Horace mean themselves by them, and *feel* in meaning, better than most other scholars. . . . One day, as I was watching the mackerel boats come in, the captain of one which had moored alongside the pier came up the wooden ladder steps close beside me. I liked the intelligent and kindly face, and after watching the play of it a while, in his talk with the people he met, asked him if he would take me out with him to see some mackerel fishing. After a little debate, he consented, and from that time forward, took me out with him in the bright mornings, and brought me in with the next tide, sometimes in open sea leaving me at the tiller even in a brisk breeze; but he would never let me bring the boat into harbour. The prettiest piece of sailing I saw was one intensely warm night with high wind, the whole sea phosphorescent in its foam, the boat running gunwale under, and currents of blue fire floating continually over the lower side of the deck. For the rest, in sunny mornings, I saw beautiful things in the colours of the fresh caught fish, but could not reconcile it with my Utopian principles of Creation that any should have poisonous spines in their fins, and still less with my Utopian principles of society that my good and thoughtful sailing master should only be a Boulogne pilot."

The refinement and intelligence of the French fishermen interested Ruskin greatly. "They talk when they should not," he wrote to his father, "but they talk like Rochefoucauld." And so, in a letter to Mrs. Burne-Jones:—

"*July 20, 1861.* . . . I had the helm for an hour and a half, and my arms are not well *on* again yet. We got in to Boulogne about ten. No, there's no real *sadness*, though much solemnity in the life. The man at the helm during the night was just as happy

as if he had been asleep, smoking, and just glancing now and then at the relief of the sail in the moonlight, to see that it was rightly filled. The other men were snoring in their hole like dormice, as merry when they began fishing as if they had been in an alehouse—nay, what say I? immeasurably more; they came out of their oily, tarry, salt black hole in perfect peace of mind to meet the face of Dawn, and do their daily work—would they have come in the same peace of mind out of the alehouse? Nay, are not they happier even than the well-conducted peasant in their homes, seeing wife and child by daylight instead of dark? And then their ‘sense.’ One of the pilots I’ve been sailing with—I was out with him all day on Monday, when it was calm enough for talking—is precisely of my way of thinking on all points of Theology, morality, politics, and economy. He kept saying, in good French, just the very thing I meant to have tried to say in bad. There’s wisdom for you! Do you think any of your clodpolly country people could have done that?”

When he returned to Boulogne later in the year, he found his friend, the captain, much interested in a review of *Modern Painters* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*! Ruskin became godfather to the captain’s boy, and his accounts for a year sixteen years later<sup>1</sup> include a Christmas present to his godson of Boulogne.

### III

The sea-air and the comparative rest of Boulogne did him good, and in August he returned to England for a round of visits; chiefly among them, to Mr. and Mrs. La Touche in Ireland:—

(*To his Father.*) “HARRISTOWN, *Thursday Morning* [August 29]. . . . Dublin Bay is larger and grander, far, than I expected, but not half so pretty, and I am entirely aghast at the town. I expected rather a fine city. It joins the filth of Manchester to the gloom of Modena, and the moral atmosphere of St. Giles’s. Far the melancholiest place I ever entered. I couldn’t stop in it—there

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 74 (1877).



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was a train for Harristown, at a quarter before eight. It set me down at half-past eight, at their stopping station, still eight miles from Mr. La Touche's; got on Irish car, and took them a little by surprise at half-past nine. Mr. La Touche, who received me, seemed entirely glad to see me—even by surprise. The children (I'm happy to say, for I feared they had been getting into late hours) had all gone to bed—but not quite into it—and Percy scampered down bare-footed like a little Irishman; Rosie followed presently in tiny pink dressing-gown; and Wisie,<sup>1</sup> like Grisi in *Norma*—all very happy and very well. Mrs. La Touche looks well, notwithstanding severe work in receiving Prince of Wales. They gave *déjeuner* to eighty people, and allowed a quantity of the villagers to come on the lawn to see the Prince. . . .

“What I have seen of the Irish themselves—in just the two hours after landing, like one's first impression of Calais—will, I suppose, remain as the permanent impression. I had no conception the stories of Ireland were so true. I had fancied all were violent exaggeration. But it is impossible to exaggerate. . . . The squalor of the rooms, of the waitress, of the old prints, of the tablecloth! Far worse than the worst of Italy. There, it is a desolate, savage squalor; this was ale-housy, nasty, ignoble—I never saw its like. The glare of the eye is very peculiar in the Irish face. And yet, through it all, such heart, and good-nature, and love of fun. At the station I was doubtful of a shilling—asked ticket giver if he would take it. ‘It's good, sir; if it isn't, I'll know ye when ye come back, and I'll thry to pass it upon ye.’ . . . I've tried to write steadily, but one can't write about Ireland quite without Irish irregularity.”

On his return from Ireland, Ruskin was for a week with his parents at Denmark Hill, and then set out once more for a long sojourn, abroad and alone.

#### IV

Ruskin revisited his fisher-friends at Boulogne; and then spent some weeks at Bonneville, afterwards settling for the rest of the year (Oct. 16–Dec. 27) at Lucerne. The hills had

<sup>1</sup> A pet name for the elder Miss La Touche (Emily).

not lost their power over him, his energy returned, and his letters contain many passages which speak of quiet enjoyment. Switzerland in the autumn delighted him, and the fall of the leaf fitted in perhaps with his mood; and as the snows descended, he was enthusiastic over the charms of the winter scenery:—

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III.

(To MRS. JOHN SIMON.) “Nov. 6, 1861. . . . I’ve actually found a view of Lucerne in which the Schweizer Hof comes in—not disadvantageously. But whether my views be bad or good, I will answer for one thing about them. They won’t get the like of them out of the place by photograph. Let me see—how many have I in hand? There’s



and



and



and



and



and



and



and



and about ten or a dozen more.”

(To MRS. CARLYLE.) “LUCERNE, Nov. 24. . . . No, I can’t come home yet. There’s a difference, I assure you—not small—between dead leaves in London Fog, and living rocks, and waters, and clouds.

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III.

I never saw anything so entirely and solemnly *divine* as the calm winter days are here. Dead or living—calm, whichever you choose to feel or call it. Intense sunshine—the fields green, as in summer, on the slopes sunward—but sparkling with clear dew, frost, and the white hoarfrost on their shadowy sides—mounded and mounded up and far to the pines. *They* all lost in avenues of light, and the great Alps clear—sharp—all strength and splendour—far round the horizon—the clear streams, still unchained, ringing about the rocks and eddying into green pools—and the lake, taking all deep into its heart under the hills. It is like the loveliest summer's morning at five o'clock—all day long. Then in ordinary weather, the colour of the beech woods and pine on the cliffs—and of the rocks in the midst of the frost clouds! I never saw such things—didn't know what winter was made or meant for, before. . . .”

(*To his Father.*) “*Christmas morning.*—It is darkish to-day, but yesterday was a clear, cloudless frost again, and I have made up my mind that the finest things one can see in summer are nothing, compared to winter scenery among the Alps when the weather is fine. Pilate looked as if it was entirely constructed of frosted silver, like Geneva filigree work—lighted by golden sunshine with long purple shadows; and the entire chain of the Alps rosy beyond. I spent an hour pleasantly enough throwing stones with Couttet, at the great icicles in the ravine. It had all the delight of being allowed to throw stones in the vastest glass and china shop that was ever ‘established,’ and was very typical to my mind of my work in general.”

Such was the silver and gold whose intrinsic value Ruskin was at this time considering and possessing.

Ruskin during this year (1861) wrote little or nothing; but he read much, as appears from letters to his father:—

“BONNEVILLE, *October 6.*—I was pleased with the following passage in Xenophon to-day. Socrates is endeavouring to persuade a man of sense and power, who has always avoided public life, to speak in the public assembly. His friend answers that he is ashamed and afraid. ‘What!’ (answers Socrates), ‘in your own house you are neither ashamed before the wise, nor timid before the powerful (you have no reason to be). Are you then

ashamed to speak before the most foolish, and the most weak? Of whom are you afraid? Of the leather-cutters? or the brass-founders? or the husbandmen? or the shopkeepers? or *of those fellows in the exchange who are always thinking how they may buy cheapest and sell dearest?* What is the use, either of our classical education or our Christianity, if we are at this moment far behind the wisdom which good men had thus reached, 400 years before Christ?"

"Oct. 23.—At Lucerne I have got quite into regular days. Morning I get up a little before seven—breakfast at eight, reading Livy; write my letters; read on at Livy till I've had enough; go out and draw till about one or two, taking care not to tire myself—then row, quietly, with little pauses and landings and sketches till five; dress for dinner at six, read Xenophon in evening—the papers at tea, at eight."

"LUCERNE, 1st November. . . . Rosie's illness has assuredly *nothing* to do with any regard she may have for me. She likes me to pet her, but it is no manner of trouble when I go away; her affection takes much more the form of a desire to please me and make me happy in any way she can, than of any want for herself, either of my letters or my company."

"LUCERNE, 21st Dec. . . . Thank you for flowers and sweets sent to Chelsea. When you have little, send there, not to Park Street. Rosie is better—and if she were not, the flowers would do her no good—and they do do good to Mrs. Carlyle. I have such a coaxing letter from Rosie that I might perhaps have come home three days sooner for it; only perhaps Mamma and you might have been more jealous than pleased, and Mrs. La Touche have thought me absurd. Here is a funny little dialogue between her and Rosie, which she (Mrs. L.) sends me:—

"Mrs. L. 'Rosie, don't you wish St. C.<sup>1</sup> would come home?' Rosie. 'Yes, indeed I do. How tiresome of him!' Mrs. L. 'Do you think he wants us at all?' Rosie. 'Well, perhaps he does. I think he wants to see me, Mamma.' Mrs. L. 'And doesn't he want to see me?' Rosie. 'Well—you know—well—Mamma, I think he likes your letters quite as much as yourself, and you write so very often—and I can't write often. So he must want to see me.'"

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<sup>1</sup> For this name, see below, p. 85.



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"LUCERNE, *November 17*. . . . Here is a grand sentence of Livy for you, rich in language as in meaning, and alliterative far more than my verses. One of the consuls, Manlius, being killed in the victory over the Veientes, and the brother of the other consul, Fabius—the latter (Marcus Fabius), being offered a triumph, thus refuses: 'If the army can triumph without its captain for its great work done in battle, he would allow it gladly; but for his own part, his family being in shadow of death by his brother's loss, and the republic itself half orphaned by the loss of one of its consuls, he would accept no laurel so defiled with private and public mourning.' It is the last piece of the sentence which is so fine: 'Se, familia funesta Q. Fabii fratris morte, republica ex parte orba, consule altero omisso, publico privatoque deformem luctu lauream non accepturum.' For my taste, Livy has overdone his F's a little at first, and in the very finest and most pathetic things, so studied an arrangement of words would be destructive, but this is very fine. When a sentence is so full of matter, the sound of the words may be fitly enjoyed; but if you get into the habit of liking the mere ring of words with no meaning, it is like living on chalk sugar-plums, and spoils the mind's digestion as they do the stomach's."

"ALTDORF, *November 25*. . . . I find Horace and I are marvelously of a mind just now in all particulars. . . . I don't know anything so magnificent in its way as Horace's calm and temperate, yet resolute, sadness. What weak nonsense the modern talk about death is compared to his—

'Quum semel occideris et de te splendida Minos  
Fecerit arbitria  
Non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te  
Restituet Pietas.'

Grand word that of eternal judgment—clear to all men—splendida arbitria—as of the sun. 'There is nothing hid that shall not be known.'"

Almost daily Ruskin sent jottings of this kind, the words of the classical authors coming home to him, as Cardinal Newman describes, with new force and meaning derived from his own experience of life. His reading of the classics during the winter at Lucerne, as afterwards at Mornex, was

very minute and careful. "As I read my Greek or Latin book," he explained (October 30), "I simply draw a firm ruled ink line down beside the text; wherever that line extends, the book is mastered for ever, or if a word or passage is not, it is written out in my note-book as a difficulty, and can be referred to in a moment. I don't care how little is done every day, but it is pleasant to see the lines advancing, and to feel that 'this at least *has* been read.'" Ruskin read his authors in this way, not only for their subject-matter, but also for their use of language. The study of words had great fascination for him, and it is one of the conspicuous features in his next book, *Munera Pulveris*. He had a series of note-books—for "Latin Verbs," "Latin Nouns," "Greek Verbs," "Greek Nouns," "Myths," "Natural History," "Geography," "Topics" (Price, Commerce, Production, Government, Poverty, Luxury, etc.), "Grammar," and so forth; and in these he entered up passages, notes, and queries from the authors he was studying—especially Xenophon, Plato, Homer, Livy, and Horace. With similar thoroughness—though with less pertinacity, it would seem—he attacked in German Studer's *Geologie der Schweiz* and Goethe's *Faust*.

## V

The studies in the classics were in large measure addressed directly to his intention of resuming and completing his essays on Political Economy. For the present, however, he had no immediate thought of publication. He wished to establish his principles firmly on the foundations laid by wise men of old, and he was as yet undecided with regard to the form into which his work should be cast. He discussed such points with his father, who, we may surmise, devoutly hoped by this time that his son would return to subjects and styles more likely to conduce to immediate fame:—

"LUCERNE, November 5.—I fully intend finishing Political Economy, but otherwise than as I began it. I have first to read Xenophon's *Economist* and Plato's *Republic* carefully, and to master

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the economy of Athens. . . . (Nov. 15.) There is plenty time to talk over probable style of Political Economy. I do not allow reviewers to disturb me ; but I cannot write when I have no audience. Those papers on Political Economy fairly tried 80,000 British public with my best work ; they couldn't taste it ; and I can give them no more." <sup>1</sup>

But "Fors" willed it otherwise. Towards the end of 1861, Froude, who was then editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, and who through Carlyle had become a friend also of Ruskin, wrote to the latter saying "that he believed there was something in my theories, and would risk the admission of what I chose to write on this dangerous subject." <sup>2</sup> Ruskin felt that the opportunity should not be lost, and the next year saw the resumption of his economic work.

During Ruskin's absence on the Continent in 1861, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. published a volume of *Selections from the Writings of John Ruskin*. It was prefaced by an "Advertisement" explaining that "Mr. Ruskin, though tacitly consenting to this publication, has taken no part in making the selections, and is in no way responsible for the appearance of the volume." The volume originated in the suggestion of Mr. Smith Williams, and he, with W. H. Harrison, was responsible for its preparation. Ruskin refers occasionally to the volume in letters to his father, and these sufficiently show his attitude to the affair:—

"LUCERNE, November 9.—Don't send the book of extracts to anybody, that you can help. Above all—don't send it *here*. It is a form of mince-pie which I have no fancy for. My crest is all very well as long as it means Pork,<sup>3</sup> but I don't love being made into sausages."

"LUCERNE, December 5.—I have your nice and kind letter of 1st December, enclosing Carlyle's, most interesting and kind also (herewith returned). As *he* says the extracts are right, I have not a word more to say against them. It is the books which must be wrong."

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the circulation of the *Cornhill Magazine*, in which *Unto this Last* appeared.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Munera Pulveris*, § 20.

<sup>3</sup> It was a boar's head: see *Præterita*, vol. ii. §§ 160, 161.

The volume, which first appeared in November 1861, enjoyed considerable popularity, and was frequently re-issued during following years. It assisted not a little to spread the author's fame; yet not in the way he desired. The dissemination of these "elegant extracts," with their sweets brought together in cloying abundance, helped to encourage the idea, which Ruskin greatly resented—especially in these years when he was concentrating himself upon economic discussion—that he was a fine writer, a pretty "word-painter," and nothing more.

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## VI

Ruskin reached England on the last day of 1861, and for the next four months he was at home. Among other work, he went again through the Turner sketches at the National Gallery, removing the mildew<sup>1</sup> and adding a good many identifications. He also wrote a preface for *Unto this Last* in book form, in order that the essays might be accessible in connexion with their sequel in *Fraser's Magazine*. The preface was dated May 10, 1862, and leaving his friend, Dr. John Simon, to make final arrangements for the publication of the book, he started in the middle of May for Switzerland and Italy. His companions on this occasion were Mr. and Mrs. Burne-Jones. Burne-Jones, and the set to which he belonged as an Oxford undergraduate, were, as we have seen, enthusiastic readers of Ruskin's books. Presently (1856) he found some occasion for writing to Ruskin. "I'm not E. C. B. Jones now, I've dropped my personality," he wrote when Ruskin had replied; "I'm a correspondent with Ruskin, and my future title is 'the man who wrote to Ruskin and got an answer by return.'"<sup>2</sup> Burne-Jones came up to London to sit at the feet of Rossetti, and Rossetti took him and William Morris to see Ruskin. "Just come back from being with our hero for four hours," he wrote—"so happy we've been: he is so kind to us, calls us his dear boys, and makes us feel like such old, old friends. To-night he

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 427.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. pp. 79, 85, 127.



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comes down to our rooms to carry off my drawing and show it to lots of people; to-morrow night he comes again, and every Thursday night the same—isn't that like a dream? think of knowing Ruskin like an equal and being called his dear boys. Oh! he is so good and kind—better than his books, which are the best books in the world." This admiration quickly ripened into an affection which the elder man as warmly reciprocated. Ruskin from the first admired and encouraged the talent of the young painter. Wherever he went, he was loud in the praise of his young friend. "Jones, you are gigantic!" he exclaimed in his enthusiastic way, after looking at a design at Little Holland House. "The alliteration," we are told, "delighted the ear of Tennyson," and "Gigantic Jones" became a nickname. Ruskin's parents were a little suspicious and jealous at first of their son's new friend. But "I am greatly favoured," wrote Ruskin to his father (Aug. 12, 1862), in "the company of a man like Jones, whose life is as pure as an archangel's, whose genius is as strange and high as that of Albert Dürer or Hans Memling, who loves me with a love as of a brother and—far more—of a devoted friend, whose knowledge of history and of poetry is as rich and varied, nay, far more rich and varied, and incomparably more scholarly than Walter Scott's was at his age." "Like me, like my wife" is a rule that does not always hold among friends; and Ruskin admits that as a rule he did not like his friends' wives, but he made an exception, he says, for Mrs. Burne-Jones. He was godfather to their boy, and they became his "dear children," or "Ned" and "Georgie." The suspicions of Ruskin's parents speedily relaxed, and Burne-Jones and his wife became frequent visitors at Denmark Hill. A reference to Burne-Jones's water-colour of "Fair Rosamond," now at Brantwood, illustrates prettily the relations between Ruskin and his father. The old gentleman had bought the drawing, without his son's knowledge; but "I keep nothing long from John," he wrote presently, and great was his joy when he found that the drawing was a favourite with his son. "I'm pleased more than you are," wrote Ruskin, when he heard what had happened, "that my father likes Rosamond."

In 1862 Burne-Jones was threatened with serious illness. Ruskin decided that change of air and scene was necessary, and carried the painter and his wife abroad with him. Ruskin "did everything," writes Lady Burne-Jones, "*en prince*, and had invited us as his guests for the whole time, but again in his courtesy agreed to ease our mind by promising to accept the studies that Edward should make while in Italy, and all was arranged and done by him as kindly and thoughtfully as if we had indeed been really his 'children.'" "As for that Ruskin," Burne-Jones wrote of this tour, "what a dear he is; of his sweetness, his talk, his look, how debonnaire to every one, of the nimbus round his head and the wings to match, consult some future occasions of talk." The designs for "Cupid and Psyche," made by the artist a few years afterwards, were given to Ruskin in gratitude for his hospitality. Ruskin in his turn presented them to Oxford—"a precious gift," he said, "in the ratified acceptance of which my University has honoured with some fixed memorial the aims of her first Art-teacher."<sup>1</sup>

The travellers went to Lucerne and thence leisurely over the St. Gothard. "I have a vision," writes Lady Burne-Jones, "of us all three sitting together, in a room with an exquisitely clean bare-boarded floor, and Mr. Ruskin reading Keats to us." At Milan, Ruskin made his head-quarters for two months. One of the principal objects of his expedition was the study of Luini. He had undertaken to report to the Committee of the Arundel Society upon frescoes by that master in Milan and its neighbourhood, and in subsequent years the Society published chromo-lithographs from several of them. The revelation of Luini to the English public was one of the works for which Ruskin took credit to himself. "I say with pride," he wrote in 1883, "which it has become my duty to express openly, that it was left to me, and to me alone, first to discern, and then to teach, so far as in this hurried century any such thing *can* be taught, the excellency and supremacy of five great painters, despised until I spoke of them—Turner, Tintoret, Luini, Botticelli, and Carpaccio. Despised,—nay scarcely in any

<sup>1</sup> *The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism*, § 26 n.

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true sense of the word, known.”<sup>1</sup> Like all Ruskin’s enthusiasms, his admiration of Luini was founded on long and minute study. In this summer of 1862 his work was concentrated on the frescoes in San Maurizio (Monastero Maggiore) at Milan (though he also visited Saronno), and he made a very careful study in water-colour of the St. Catherine with her wheel, on the right of the altar in the third chapel. The copy, which is of life size, may be seen in the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford. He reported the progress of the work in letters to his father:—

“*July 25.*—I have been examining St. Catherine from head to foot, and she’s coming so nice that I’m in no mind to spoil her or leave her unfinished for a day more or less. There’s a corner of one of her lips which will take a day yet, and two or three curls of hair which will take another; then there’s a little finger and bit of back of hand; and some of her gold brocade wants retouching.”

“*MORNEX, September 14.*—I am truly glad you like St. Catherine. I was entirely certain you would have liked her, had I got her finished; but the head is so infinitely inferior to what I meant it to be, the hot weather rendering it impossible to work delicately enough, that I feared it would seem coarse and valueless. . . . Great part of the time and labour were spent in measuring and placing the curls of the hair; the place of every touch is of importance in the expression.”

Ruskin’s devotion to the art of Italy received public recognition at this time; he was made an Honorary Member of the Florentine Academy. A little earlier, he had been similarly elected to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (the oldest artistic body in the United States).

Having finished his work on Luini, Ruskin made his way to Geneva and looked about for quarters in which to spend the winter, and to find peace and quiet for his contributions to *Fraser’s Magazine*. He found what he wanted at the village of Mornex, a few miles from Geneva on the slopes of the Salève. This was to be his home for many months; his sojourn and the work there are the subject of the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii.

## CHAPTER IV

### MORNEX—*MUNERA PULVERIS*

(1862–1863)

“The sea wave, with all its beneficence, is yet devouring and terrible; but the silent wave of the blue mountain is lifted towards heaven in a stillness of perpetual mercy; and the one surge, unfathomable in its darkness, the other, unshaken in its faithfulness, for ever bear the seal of their appointed symbolism:

Thy *justice* is like the great mountains :

Thy *judgments* are a great deep.”

—*Modern Painters.*

To the south of Geneva rises a mountain which has close associations with two great English writers. The precipice of the Salève towards Geneva goes down three thousand feet in great cliffs or steps. On the other side, the mountain slopes gently, many a farm and homestead nestling upon it. “How lovely is this place,” wrote Robert Browning from La Saisiaz, “in its solitude and seclusion . . . the peace and quiet move me most”; his ascent of the Salève, which rose behind his house, is described at the beginning of the poem:—

“Petty feat and yet prodigious; every side my glance was bent  
O’er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the whole  
ascent.

Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels, now minute and now  
immense :

Earth’s most exquisite disclosure, heaven’s own God in evidence.”

It was in November 1877 that Browning thus mounted the Salève, reasoning of God and the Soul, of life here and of life beyond. Fifteen years before Ruskin had



CHAP. sought seclusion beneath the same mountain, for thinking  
IV. out the problems of justice and judgment in the economic order of the world.

## I

In August 1862 Ruskin took rooms at Mornex, in the Villa Gaullieur. "I am established," he wrote to his father (August 16), "in a little parlour with a look out only on some pines and convolvulus blossoms, and the green slope of the Salève like a bit of Malvern hills above; on the other side I can see the top of the Môle and of Mont Blanc, but little more. I have green chairs, a deal floor, and peace, and my books all about me, and your kind letter, which I am very grateful for." Presently, however, he found the rooms too cramped, and the view did not satisfy him. His establishment was extensive. He had with him his servant Crawley, and Couttet, the guide; and he was subsequently joined by Mr. and Mrs. Allen and their children. So he took another small cottage a little lower down the hill—a cottage *ornée* in which the Empress of Russia had once stayed:—

(*To his Father.*) "MORNEX, *September 17, 1862.*—I have slept in my new house two nights, and passed the day in the garden, and am much pleased. The bedroom window opens on a wooden gallery about six or seven feet above the garden. . . . The ground slopes precipitously, part grass, part vines, to a ravine about four hundred feet deep; the torrent at the bottom seen for about two miles up—among its granite blocks (something like view from Lynton in Devonshire); but on the other side of the ravine extends the lovely plain of La Roche, to the foot of the Brezon, above which I have the Mont du Reposoir, and then the Aiguille de Varens; then Mont Blanc and the Grandes Jorasses and the Aiguille Verte; and lastly the Môle on the left, where my own pear-trees come into the panorama and guide back to the marigolds. The two houses are just about a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards apart. I sleep at the Empress's—(Crawley and Allen above me), Couttet here; dress chiefly outside in my balcony, the air being as soft as in Italy; then walk over here, after a turn round

the garden ; find breakfast laid by Franceline, and my little table beside it with Horace and Xenophon. Read till eleven ; walk or garden till half-past one. Dine here, where I have a nice little dining-room ; back into the garden, tea among my convolvulus's there—with sunset on the Alps opposite ; bed at nine or half-past."

Such was the hermitage which now became Ruskin's home, and which saw the travail of his soul, while he was writing the greater part of *Munera Pulveris*. The larger of Ruskin's two houses has since become an inn, but the sojourn there of the great English writer, who, "whilst treading a *via dolorosa*, placed a posy before every shrine of beauty and gentleness and love,"<sup>1</sup> has not been forgotten.<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later Ruskin revisited the place, and wrote an account of it to Mr. Allen (Sept. 8, 1882) :—

"When I came in sight of Mornex I saw they had new-roofed my old house, and (having Mr. Collingwood and Baxter with me) was rather taken aback at finding it a flourishing hotel ! I took them in and walked along the terrace to the old Pavillon without saying anything. The view was lovelier to me than ever, but there were people on the terrace having forenoon beer ! I went into the house and sat down in the *salle-à-manger* *under* my old room. The waitress, after taking order for bread and cheese, stared at being asked for news of the Chevaliers ;<sup>3</sup> but the landlord, though young, knew of them, and after being asked a few probing questions, asked in *his* turn, 'Seriez-vous M. Ruskin ?' To my surprise and considerable complacency I found that English people often came up to see where I lived, and that the landlord even knew that I always slept in the Pavillon ! I asked leave to see the old room. It was turned into a bedroom, but otherwise it and its galleries unchanged. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Preface by the Right Hon. George Wyndham to the privately-printed *Letters to M. G. and H. G.* by John Ruskin.

<sup>2</sup> A board on the front of the house bears this legend : "Hotel et Pension des Glycines. A. Cora-  
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jod. Séjour de Wagner and Ruskin." Richard Wagner spent some weeks in the house a few years after Ruskin's visit.

<sup>3</sup> The Chevaliers were the people in the village who used to send in Ruskin's meals.

CHAP. Reminiscences of Ruskin still linger about the house. A  
 IV. few years ago (1904) a French critic, M. Augustin Filon, having gone to the mountains for rest and peace, found that he had hired the very rooms occupied by Ruskin, that he was writing in Ruskin's chair, by Ruskin's window. The villagers still had memories of their old friend. "A thin-faced, reddish-whiskered Englishman," they said, "neither old nor young." They did not know him as a writer of books. They must have thought him an eccentric person (being English). They used to see him messing (*tripotant*) about his little kitchen, digging, delving in his garden, mixing mortar, trundling his wheelbarrow, pottering about all over the place, never idle. In that far-off period, reflects M. Filon, Ruskin was practising his philosophy of the union between brain work and hand work, the philosophy which in after time he taught his Oxford students when he turned them into navvies—to show them that a well-made road was "a work of art." And M. Filon goes on: "It was Ruskin who put up the bell by which I call for my dinner; and who paved the courtyard. Every single stone of it was carried on the back of a diminutive donkey, Ruskin having devised this whimsical method of transport as a means of disguising his act of charity to the donkey's owner, a very poor woman."<sup>1</sup>

In November 1862 Ruskin returned to England for a short time in order to see his parents and to give an address to the Working Men's College.<sup>2</sup> By Christmas, however, he was back again at Mornex. The peace of the place, the beauty of the surrounding country, and its rich geological interest restored him to much of his old power of enjoyment. He had days at Mornex when his very happiness frightened him; and others, on which the mood of despondency returned:—

(To MRS. HEWITT.) "Sept. 13, 1862. . . . You ask for an account of my mind—you might as well ask for a well-drawn map

<sup>1</sup> From the *Gaulois* of September 18, 1904, an article entitled "La Maison de Ruskin à Mornex."

<sup>2</sup> This is the address noticed in an earlier chapter; Vol. I. p. 380.

of Middlesex, with the Duke of Buccleuch's plans for embanking the Thames. You ask my plans—I have none, except to live out of England, which I am tired of, and which is, so far as it is acquainted with me, tired of me. You ask how I am in health—I have not the least notion, except that I walk somewhat, eat somewhat, sleep somewhat. You ask, Is the Burden of Life lighter?—Much, for I have less of it now, and less in prospect than ever before. What else is there? Of Associates? Plenty; there are plenty of vipers hereabouts if one looks for them—some large lizards and innumerable small ones—and, what is a mercy, plenty of accessible places which are neither men nor women. . . . By the way, Aubrey de Vere is the noblest person I've yet heard of your getting hold of. He will do you good, he is one of the very, very, *very* few religious men living. You may tell him (I knew him once, and know his work still)—that if ever I get better, *I* mean to be religious again too, but my religion is to be old Greek. It will do quite as well as his, and is entirely 'certain' also, which is an immense comfort."

(*To his Father.*) "Oct. 27.—I have had so good a day, to-day, that it almost frightens me, lest I should be 'fey' or lest something should be going to happen. I have been literally in 'high spirits'—the first time this six or seven years. I was walking on the old, *old* road from Geneva to Chamouni, down the steep hill to the bridge and up again, and towards Bonneville—Mont Blanc so clear, and all the near mountains so purple and pure, and the sunshine so dazzling, and air crystal with slight bracing North wind; and I had found out quantities of things in a heap, in Homer and Theognis in the morning, and found more in my head as I walked; and came to old things by the roadside that I've known these twenty years, and it *was* so like a dream. Then when I came home I had your pleasant letter, and a nice one from Froude, and nice one from Allen—giving good account of College,—and sate after dinner on my sofa quietly, watching the sunshine fade softly on the aiguilles of Chamouni and the Reposoir. And it is so strange to me to feel happy that it frightens me."

Ruskin liked Mornex so well that the idea of fixing his tent permanently among the mountains grew upon him. He had a friendly neighbour in an old Genevese



CHAP. doctor<sup>1</sup>—seventy-five years old and still hale and hearty.  
 IV. “He is going to walk up the Salève with me to-morrow,” writes Ruskin to his father (September 9, 1862), “saying with perfect coolness that he will wait for me when I am out of breath, which, I doubt not, he will in very truth have to do. He is going to show me from the top the various districts of this part of Savoy—where it is damp or dry—bleak or sheltered—clay or rock in soil, etc., and to tell me the qualities of the hill plants. He says I ought to live for at least three months of the year in the gentian zone.” On his mountain rambles Ruskin was the most delightful and stimulating of companions. He often took Mr. Allen with him at this time. “He had an eye for everything,” said Mr. Allen; “clouds and stones, hills and flowers all interested him in the same intense way; and his printed passages of adoration in presence of the sublimity of nature were the expression of his inmost feelings and in accord with his own practice. I seem to hear him now breaking forth into a rhapsody of delight as we came unexpectedly, during a walk up the Brezon, upon a sloping bank of the star-gentian. He was full, too, of sympathy with the life of the people. I can see him now kneeling down, as he knelt on Easter Sunday 1863, to pray with a peasant woman at a wayside chapel.”<sup>2</sup> The Brezon, a mountain rich both in botanical and in mineralogical interest, was a constant delight to Ruskin. There is a spot a little below the summit which was the destination of many a geological ramble, and which he used to call “the lunch *bed*.” The erratic blocks greatly interested him; one of great size—containing 15,000 cubic feet of gneiss from Mont Blanc—he desired to purchase; he was agreeably surprised to find that a citizen of Geneva had already bought it, so that its preservation might be guaranteed. On other days Ruskin would walk or drive in the valley. A favourite spot was near Bonneville, where

<sup>1</sup> Dr. L. A. Gosse, mentioned by Ruskin in a letter to the *Times* (Oct. 24, 1862) on “Oak Silkworms” (reprinted in *Arrows of the Chace*).

<sup>2</sup> “Ruskin and his Books: an Interview with his Publisher,” *Strand Magazine*, December 1902.

at a particular hour there was a peculiarly beautiful glint of sunshine on a cascade to be seen; great would be his vexation if he arrived too late or the clouds were envious. The gloom which overshadows many of Ruskin's letters and the bitterness which colours his writings at this time were not unmixed. If the sorrows of his sensitive soul were deeper than other men's, so also was the sunshine of his unclouded hours more intense.

## II

Ruskin during his sojourn at Mornex reverted with some enthusiasm to a scheme he had long had in his mind for the reproduction of drawings by Turner. I have referred to the uncertainty of aim which perplexed him during these years (1860-63). Ultimately he devoted his main thoughts to economics, but he often felt equally drawn to the continuation of his artistic work. It is curious that a biographical notice of him, which appeared in 1861 and which he himself revised, ended with these words: "Mr. Ruskin is reported on good authority to have abandoned his other studies, in order to devote his future labours exclusively to the work of Turner and the Venetians." What Ruskin said to the biographer was "to the illustration of the works of Turner and the Venetians."<sup>1</sup> This intention, in the case of Turner, had long been present to him, and at Mornex he began to carry it out. Mr. Allen was instructed to bring out a printing-press in order that they might print the plates which he was to engrave from Ruskin's tracings of Turner's drawings. The work did not make great progress, but impressions from a few plates thus made are in existence.

But Ruskin's main work at Mornex was done in complete solitude. This consisted of the essays on Political Economy for *Fraser's Magazine*. The first of the series, which appeared in the June number, had been written at Milan.

<sup>1</sup> The notice appeared in *A Dictionary of Contemporary Biography: a Handbook of the Peerage of Rank, Worth, and Intellect*. London and Glasgow: Richard Griffin & Company, 1861.

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The other three appeared in the numbers for September and December 1862, and April 1863. With regard to these papers, Ruskin regretted their "affected concentration of language"—the result, he said, of "thinking too long over particular passages, in many and many a solitary walk towards the mountains of Bonneville or Annecy."<sup>1</sup> In revising the essays for publication in book-form he found it impossible to break up the concentration, and the work remains one of the most difficult of his treatises. Also, though the book is closely reasoned, and follows throughout a clear plan, there is mixed with it so much of excursus into classical fields, so much of verbal and literary argument, that readers fail to keep hold of the main thread. Ruskin was occupying himself at the time with a minute study of many Greek and Latin authors, and Dante was his constant companion. All of them were impressed into the service of his economical theories. There is a letter to his father written from Mornex which well illustrates the manner in which Ruskin made everything that he was reading work together; it also illustrates a particular passage in *Munera Pulveris* (§ 87):—

"October 23.—I have been reading the *Odyssey* to-night with much delight, and more wonder. Everything now has become a mystery to me—the more I learn, the more the mystery deepens and gathers. This which I used to think a poet's fairy tale, I perceive to be a great enigma—the Apocalypse, in a sort, of the Greeks. People's ineffable carelessness usually mixes up the gentle, industrious, kind Calypso with the enchantress Circe. She is the Patmos spirit of the Greeks (Calypso, Apo-Calypso), the goddess of wild nature. But what it all means, or meant, heaven only knows. I see we are all astray about everything—the best wisdom of the world has been spoken in these strange enigmas. . . ."

Ruskin's reading of these "enigmas" is full of flashes of insight and abounds in happy illustrations; but it sometimes led him into fanciful analogies, dubious etymologies, and strained interpretations. Matthew Arnold selected a

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Munera Pulveris*, § 22.

passage from the essays in *Fraser's Magazine*—that in which Ruskin analyses the meaning of Shakespeare's names—to illustrate what he called “the note of provinciality”; by which he meant an absence of moderation and proportion—an excessive indulgence in literary whims—in Ruskin's criticism. His infinite ingenuity in discovering hidden meanings in ancient legends, and his determination to make all things—in classical and mediæval poetry and mythology—work together for the enforcement of his principles, recall the syncretism of the first centuries after Christ, when Greek philosophy sought to harmonise all creeds and assimilate all legends and all worships.

The allusive note in the essays in *Fraser's Magazine* is struck in the title—“*Munera Pulveris*”—which Ruskin afterwards gave to them. This title is one of the most obscure in his series, and even learned commentators dismiss it with the bald remark that it is cryptic. As the Ode from which it comes is one of the most vexed passages in Horace, the title admits of a large number of conceivable interpretations. I have discussed the matter fully elsewhere;<sup>1</sup> and to any one who is familiar with the book, and with parallel passages in Ruskin's writings,<sup>2</sup> there is little room for doubt. “I am not fantastic,” he writes, “in my titles, as is often said; but try shortly to mark my chief purpose in the book by them.”<sup>3</sup> His chief purpose in *Munera Pulveris* is to attack the conception of wealth in the current political economy of the time; a conception which takes “dust for deity,” which leads men to “gather dust for treasure.” The title of the book expresses the fallacy which it is meant to expose, and may be translated as Gifts, or Functions, of the Dust.

The long interval which elapsed between the appearance of the essays in *Fraser's Magazine* (1863) and their publication as a book (1872) was due to a rebuff of the same kind as that which had cut short the earlier essays in the *Cornhill*. The fourth paper was sent to *Fraser's Magazine* from

<sup>1</sup> Library Edition, vol. xvii. pp. lxxv.—lxxviii.

§ 34, and *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 16.

<sup>2</sup> See especially *Cestus of Aglaia*,

<sup>3</sup> *Ariadne Florentina*, § 27.



CHAP. Mornex in March 1863, and duly appeared in the number  
IV. for April. "The present paper," wrote Ruskin at the end of it, "completes the definitions necessary for future service. The next in order will be the first chapter of the body of the work." But the next in order was never to come. Froude, the editor of the *Magazine*, "had not wholly lost courage," but "the Publisher indignantly interfered; and the readers of *Fraser*," says Ruskin, "as those of the *Cornhill*, were protected for that time from further disturbance on my part."<sup>1</sup> This second veto was a bitter vexation to Ruskin. Mr. Allen well remembered the day on which Ruskin heard the news; he paced his terrace-walk for hours like a caged lion, and deep gloom gathered upon him. Froude had clearly not lost faith in his contributor; for, a few months later, when Ruskin's views had called forth a reply in *Macmillan's Magazine* (by Professor Cairnes), Froude invited Ruskin to write a rejoinder. This supplementary paper—in the form of a dialogue on Gold—was duly sent to Froude, but it was not printed at the time. Probably it was Ruskin's father who stopped it; he was particularly sensitive, as a City merchant, to his son's heresies on questions of currency; and Ruskin had promised his father "to publish no more letters without letting you see them."<sup>2</sup> Many years later this suppressed chapter came to light, Ruskin's servant and amanuensis Crawley having been in possession of a copy of it. It is now included in the Library Edition.

It should be stated, as explaining the stoppage of *Munera Pulveris* in *Fraser's Magazine*, that the papers excited the same violent hostility and reprobation that were called forth by *Unto this Last*. Indeed, the outcry was now at its height, for reviews of *Unto this Last*, in its collected form (1862), were appearing. The contemptuous tone of the writers in the press, and the remonstrances of private friends, hurt Ruskin's father not a little, and a strain of vexation in the son's letters at this time was caused by paternal entreaties for alterations or suppressions. Ruskin

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Munera Pulveris*,  
§ 20.

<sup>2</sup> From a letter of November  
23, 1863.

in reply (Mornex, August 19, 1862) begged his father "to mind critiques as little as possible; read, of me, what you can enjoy, put by the rest, and leave my 'reputation' in my own hands, and in God's—in whose management of the matter you and mama should trust more happily and peacefully than I can—for you believe that He brings all right for everything and everybody; and I, that He appoints noble laws, and blesses those who obey them, and destroys them who do not." Now, as in the case of the papers in the *Cornhill Magazine*, Ruskin had an enthusiastic supporter in Carlyle, who tried to reassure Ruskin's father. Writing to Ruskin on Oct. 24, 1863, Froude said:—

"The world talks of the article in its usual way. I was at Carlyle's last night. . . . He said that in writing to your father as to subject, he had told him that when Solomon's temple was building it was credibly reported that at least 10,000 sparrows sitting on the trees round declared that it was entirely wrong, quite contrary to received opinion, hopelessly condemned by public opinion, etc. Nevertheless it got finished, and the sparrows flew away and began to chirp in the same note about something else."

To Ruskin himself Carlyle had already written (June 30, 1862):—

"I have read, a month ago, your *First in Fraser*, and ever since have had a wish to say to it and you, *Euge, macta nova virtute*. I approved in every particular; calm, definite, clear; rising into the sphere of *Plato* (our almost best), which in exchange for the sphere of *Macculloch, Mill and Co.* is a mighty improvement! . . ."

### III

Cut short in mid-career, the essays entitled *Munera Pulveris* had to bide their time; and in 1863 Ruskin turned away, in disappointment, from economic writing, and devoted himself to finishing a lecture for the Royal Institution on the Forms of the Stratified Alps of Savoy. To complete his mountain studies, he left Mornex for a

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while and went to the Lake of Annecy—staying first at the Hôtel de Genève, Annecy, and afterwards at Talloires on the east bank of the lake, in the ancient Benedictine Abbey, part of which had been turned into an hotel. He found the “stratification of the mountains inconceivably wonderful and interesting,” and enjoyed the coming of the spring. A letter to his father describes the glory of an April day:—

“TALLOIRES, *April 23*.—I wonder whether the things which Wordsworth tells in *The Two April Mornings* really took place on an April morning, or whether he chose April afterwards because its mornings are so sweet. Be that as it may, the chance or choice was admirable, for the exquisite softness and purity of the mornings just now among the blossoms are indescribable. A summer’s morning, however fine, is always a little hot, misty, and languid—at least unless you get up at four; but just now, the calm lake with the clear snowy mountains, at seven o’clock, stirred with a breeze here and there on its surface into a blue bloom, across its reflections—and the soft sunlight on the green of the hill-sides, which touches them as lightly as the dew—being to the rich massed green of summer just what hoarfrost is to snow; and the air, nearly made up of the life of blossoms; feeling as one could fancy peaches melted into air would feel—with just shade enough of rock and pine to make it all grave and deep—as well as intense in sweetness—all this would be nice, if one were in a good humour, and is helpful when one isn’t. But it gets windy in the middle of the day, and then I lose my temper, and don’t recover it till after next morning. Though the evenings are well enough too. The cuckoo is always in five or six places at once—and the air is quiet again—Jupiter in the south, Venus in the west, shine like pieces of the moon, brighter for being broken off: the moon holds her old self in her arms, as one recollects one’s old round life when only a quarter of it is left—the rest ghostly—the Tournette of Annecy glows like a censer, with ‘strange fire’—the light seeming within her rocks, and warm—and the singing of the birds runs in rivulets down the glades and makes song-falls over the rocks and through the budding thickets. But it is all always going away—fading, and one has to go to bed, and try to die for eight hours; and if one doesn’t die, one has to be half dead all the next day—which seems to me a

very sorrowful arrangement. If one could put one's self out, like the candle, and light one's self with a match, when one wanted one's self to see by—and never run into gutters, nor burn at both ends—what a nice world it might be.”

Presently he returned to Mornex. The spring was still delightful, but there was gloom in “the contrast of spring and its blossoming with the torpor and misery of the people; nothing can be more dreadful than their suffering, from mere ignorance and lethargy, no one caring for them.”

At the end of May 1863 Ruskin returned to England, and on June 5 he delivered at the Royal Institution the lecture which had occupied much of his time and thought during the preceding months. This lecture is the first of Ruskin's contributions to geological discussion, and the reports and notices of it, both at home and abroad, testify to the interest which it excited. A main object of the lecture was to protest against the extreme application of the theory of the excavatory power of glaciers. A passage or two from one of the reports of the lecture will show his point of view:—

“‘There have been suggestions made that the glaciers of the Alps may have scooped out the Lake of Geneva. You might as well think they had scooped out the sea. A glacier scoops out nothing; once let it meet with a hollow, and it spreads into it, and can no more deepen its receptacle than a custard can deepen a pie-dish.’ That idea he considers the more singular, because, with its strongest and most concentrated force, the glacier of the Rhone has been unable to open for itself a passage between the two small contradictory rocks of the Gorge of St. Maurice. ‘So little effectual has it been in excavating them that the Rhone is still straightened for a passage, and a single town is fortalice enough to defend the pass where a key unlocks a kingdom; and yet we are asked to suppose that a glacier power which, concentrated, could not open a mountain gate, could dig out a sea-bottom when diffused.’ There is a more curious proof still of the excavating incapacity of ice. Full in the face of the deepest fall of this same Rhone glacier two impertinent little rocks stood up to challenge



CHAP. it. Don Quixote with his herd of bulls was rational in comparison.  
IV. But the glacier could make nothing of them. 'It had to divide, slide, split, shiver itself over them, and ages afterwards, when it had vanished like an autumn vapour from the furrow of the Rhone, the little rocks still stood triumphant, and the Bishops of Sion built castles on their tops, and thence defied the torrent of the Reformation coming up that valley as the rocks had done the passage of the glacier coming down it.' "

Ruskin also combated the explanation given by the Swiss geologists of the north-west face of the Salève. This had been "considered to be formed by vertical beds, raised into that position during the tertiary periods"; Ruskin's investigations led him, on the contrary, to conjecture that "the appearance of vertical beds was owing to a peculiarly sharp and distinct cleavage, at right angles with the beds." "I was the first to point out," he said of this lecture, "the real relation of the vertical cleavages to the stratification, in the limestone ranges belonging to the chalk formation in Savoy."<sup>1</sup>

Another public engagement which had called Ruskin home was to give evidence before a Royal Commission on the Royal Academy. This was on June 8. "The only evidence of the lot," wrote Rossetti after perusing the Report, "which is worth reading as original thought and insight, is Ruskin's."<sup>2</sup> His suggestions for reform in the Academy are by no means out of date. After seeing the Academy's exhibition of the year, he wrote criticisms to his friends:—

(To FREDERIC LEIGHTON.) "June, 1863.—I've only just had time to look in, yesterday, at R. Ac., and your pictures are the only ones that interest me in it; and the two pretty ones, peacocks and basket, interest me much. Ahab I don't much like.<sup>3</sup> You

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *Deucalion*.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters to William Allingham*, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> The pictures referred to were "Jezebel and Ahab having caused Naboth to be put to death, go

down to take possession of his vineyard; they are met at the entrance by Elijah the Tishbite"; "A Girl with a basket of fruit"; and "A Girl feeding peacocks."

know you, like all people good for anything in this age and country (as far as Palmerston), are still a boy—and a boy can't paint Elijah. But the pretty girls are very nice—very *nearly* beautiful. I can't say more, can I? If once they *were* beautiful, they would be immortal too."

(*To the same.*) "June, 1863.—I saw Browning last night; and he said he couldn't come till Thursday week; but do you think it would put you quite off your work if you came out here early on Friday and I drove you into Kensington as soon as you liked? We have enough to say and look at, surely, for two mornings—one by ourselves? I want, seriously, for one thing to quit you of one impression concerning me. You are quite right—'ten times right' in saying I never focus criticism. Was there ever criticism worth adjustment? The light is so ugly, it deserves no lens, and I never use one. But you never, on the other hand, have observed sufficiently that in such rough focussing as I give it, I measure faults not by their greatness, but their avoidableness. A man's great faults are natural to him—inevitable; if *very* great—undemonstrable, deep in the innermost of things. I never or rarely speak of them. They must be forgiven, or the picture left. But a common fault in perspective is not to be so passed by. You may not tell your friend, but with deepest reserve, your thoughts of the conduct of his life, but you tell him, if he has an ugly coat, to change his tailor, without fear of his answering that you don't focus your criticism."

(*To GEORGE RICHMOND.*) "June 16.—I can't tell you how much I liked Willy's picture.<sup>1</sup> I only saw it yesterday, or should have written before. It is very wonderful and beautiful—the prettiest thing to me in the room (except little head which takes my fancy more by chance than anything else—'The First Sitting'—in corner of large room). Your Lord Shaftesb. is a grand drawing—ugly subject. I hope Willy's all right again. He's going ahead too fast. Love to all the children."

Ruskin then went for a round of visits in the North—to Winnington, to Wallington, to Lady Waterford at Ford Castle, and to his friend, and Turner's, the Rev. William

<sup>1</sup> "Mary, daughter of J. W. "A First Sitting" was by W. Ogle, M.D.," by W. B. Richmond. Fisher.

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Kingsley at Thirsk. To Winnington, on this occasion, Ruskin took with him Mr. and Mrs. Burne-Jones; and in the *Memorials* of the painter we catch a glimpse of Ruskin "taking his place occasionally in a quadrille or a country dance. He looked very thin, scarcely more than a black line, as he moved about amongst the white girls in his evening dress." <sup>1</sup>

#### IV

In September 1863 he returned once more to the Alps. His mind was now set upon building a house for himself among the Savoy mountains, and of making it his permanent home. He had already during his residence at Mornex been prospecting. It was to be a "hill-top" house. He had been one day for a solitary ramble up the Brezon, above Bonneville, and was entranced with the flowers and the view. There on the mountain summit was the place chosen for his chalet. He entered upon the scheme with characteristic enthusiasm. The good people of Bonneville were delighted. They thought to see Ruskin permanently established among them as an earthly providence; and Mr. Allen, who was on one occasion sent to meet the village elders on the spot and discuss water supply, describes how he was received with salvoes of artillery. "The hardest day's work I ever had in my life," he told me, "was marking out the boundaries of Mr. Ruskin's intended purchase." He was resolved to buy the greater part of the mountain. There was no water; he would construct a dam to collect the snow. Rossetti was to come out and design the decorations of the chalet; Burne-Jones was to paint the walls. Alas! this "house beautiful" among the mountains was to remain a chalet in the air, but for a time the scheme was very near accomplishment. He had two objects in view. First, as he explains in *Præterita*, he wanted to make some practical effort to help the peasantry, whose fundamental nobleness of character he respected, and for whose hard and often neglected lot he had so profound a pity.

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. p. 264.

But also, as I have explained in the preceding chapter, he had more and more come to feel the homelessness of his own home. He had told the plan to Burne-Jones, who was distressed at Ruskin's loneliness of spirit, and pleaded that, as an alternative to exile, he should find some retreat in England: for this home the painter would design a set of hangings with figures from Chaucer, and the girls at Winnington would work them. Mrs. Burne-Jones had also written to Ruskin's father, who replied as follows:—

“I am happy to think of my Son possessing so much of your and Mr. Jones' regard, and to hear of so many excellent people desiring to keep him at home. . . . He so far proceeded towards a settlement in Savoy as to have begun treating with a Commune about a purchase of Land. His duty is, therefore, to go to Savoy and honourably withdraw from the Affair, by paying for all Trouble occasioned, and I fully expect the Savoyards will afford him some ground for declining a purchase by the exorbitant prices they will ask for their Land. As for the ground he has bought at Chamouni, it will be a pleasure to him to keep it though he saw it not once in seven years. It is the Building Plan near Bonneville that I should rejoice to see resigned. . . . He has made a short engagement to go to Switzerland with the Rev. Osborne Gordon, which I hope he will keep, and I shall endeavour to hope that his Engagements abroad may in future be confined to a Tour with a friend, and that Home Influences may in the end prevail. . . . My Son's fellow Traveller now is the best he could possibly go with. Being rather cynical in his views generally, and not over enthusiastic upon Alps, he is not likely to much approve of the middle heights of the Brezon for a Building Site.”

The quiet humour and practical wisdom of this letter, and, discernible beneath them, the affectionate tenderness for his son, are very characteristic of the father whom Ruskin was soon to lose. The old man's shrewdness was justified by the event. Ruskin went to Geneva with his “cynical” tutor, who walked up to the proposed hermitage and, “with his usual sagacity, calculated the daily expense of getting anything to eat, up those 4000 feet from the plain.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 206.



CHAP.  
IV.

Having successfully accomplished the climb, and remembering that the return journey would be of the same length, Gordon remarked drily, "If you ask your friends to dinner, it will be a nice walk home for them, at night." Ruskin feared that if they came to call and found him "not at home," they would not come again; to which Gordon added, "and I don't think they would come again anyhow."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps these quiet criticisms had their effect, but the determining factor was the conduct of the Commune of Bonneville, who raised their price on Ruskin exorbitantly. "Unable to see why anybody should want to buy a waste of barren rock, with pasturage only for a few goats in the summer," they concluded that he had found a gold-mine or a coal-bed in it—a suspicion to which Ruskin's frequent visits with his geological hammer, and Mr. Allen or Couttet carrying baskets for the collection of mineralogical specimens, no doubt afforded additional ground. The land at Chamouni, above the chalets of Blaitière, had been duly bought; but Ruskin never built upon it, and presently sold it, "perceiving what ruin was inevitable in the valley after it became a tourist rendezvous." The top of the Brezon he left on the Commune's hands; and after spending a few weeks at Chamouni—busy mainly with geology—he went off to Northern Switzerland, to sketch at Baden and Lauffenbourg and Schaffhausen, and returned to Mornex no more.

A letter written from Chamouni will serve to introduce a literary incident of some interest:—

(To MRS. JOHN SIMON.) "*Sept.* 27. . . . Did John tell you of the delightful Eastern poem I've got, of eleventh century? There's such a jolly stanza out of it:—

'Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,  
Asking "What Lamp had Destiny to guide  
Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"  
And "A blind understanding," Heaven replied.'

I wish the old Persian could see how much better I write for love of him. At all events, I'm coming back to London before the last day of November, as far as I know my destiny at present.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's letter to his father from Bonneville, September 11, 1863.

“Tell John *this* is going to be a German bath next year, so he needn’t send me anywhere else. The streams have been playing billiards over the valley meadows to purpose, and have left too many of their white balls to look pretty—they can’t complain of humans after that.”

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IV.

Ruskin, it will be seen, had got hold of FitzGerald’s *Omar Khayyám*, which had made a fugitive first appearance in 1859. A transcript of the whole poem exists in one of his note-books; “very deep and lovely,” he thought it. In September 1863 he addressed a letter to “The Translator of the Rubaiyat of Omar”—a letter of enthusiastic admiration, one may surmise from FitzGerald’s characteristic reference to it: “a sudden fit of Fancy, I suppose, which he is subject to.” Ruskin entrusted the letter to an American friend (perhaps Mr. Stillman), who, either forgetting all about it, or failing to discover the author, left it in his desk for ten years. In 1873 he passed it on to Professor Norton, who had then recently made Carlyle’s acquaintance. Norton in turn sent the letter to Carlyle, who only then for the first time came to the knowledge of FitzGerald’s translation.

## V

In the middle of November Ruskin again returned to England, and after a few days with his parents he went North—making Winnington again his headquarters, and paying visits to Manchester and to Lord Somers at Eastnor. Letters to his father show that the causes of vexation and misunderstanding still stood. Ruskin wants to write on this or that subject to the papers, but forbears because he is sure his father would disapprove. The father pines for his son to achieve higher fame, and laments his fall into religious doubt:—

(*To his Father.*) “WINNINGTON, Dec. 16, 1863.—It is really very hard on you that my courses of thought have now led me out of the way of fame—and into that of suffering, for it is a dark world enough towards the close of life, with my creed. One thing, however, I wish you could put out of your mind—that either

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Carlyle, Colenso, or Froude, much less any one less than they, have had the smallest share in this change. . . . Men ought to be severely disciplined and exercised in the sternest way in daily life—they should learn to lie on stone beds and eat black soup, but they should never have their hearts broken. . . . The two terrific mistakes which Mama and you involuntarily fell into were the exact reverse of this *in both* ways—you fed me effeminately and luxuriously to that extent that I actually now could not travel in rough countries without taking a cook with me!—but you thwarted me in all the earnest fire of passion and life.”

I do not think that the old man took these reproaches very tragically to heart. He had a firm conviction, and probably there was some foundation for it, that his son's vexation was caused by physical ill-health which would right itself. Also in his discussions with his father, as in other connexions, Ruskin's pen was much more bitter than his tongue. When actually in his father's company the son was cheerful, considerate, even gay. And so for a few weeks more father and son lived together. The last glimpse that we have of them is pretty. Ruskin had been dining out, and came home late. He found his father sitting up, in order to read to his son two business letters he had written on a difficult subject during the evening. Next day the old man became ill, and he died a week later in his son's arms. “Such a fine, noble old man,” wrote Froude; “or rather not old, for he seemed in his mental and moral prime. He struck me as being so true a man—true in word and in deed.” Ruskin's own epitaph—inscribed on his father's tomb in Shirley Churchyard, near Croydon, was this:—

Here rests from day's well-sustained burden,

JOHN JAMES RUSKIN,

born in Edinburgh, May 18th, 1785.

He died in his home in London, March 3rd, 1864.

He was an entirely honest merchant,  
and his memory is, to all who keep it, dear and helpful.

His son, whom he loved to the uttermost  
and taught to speak truth, says this of him.

## CHAPTER V

### HOME LIFE AT DENMARK HILL

(1864-1866)

“I saw her upon nearer view,  
A spirit, yet a Woman too!  
Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin-liberty;  
A countenance in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet.”—WORDSWORTH.

THE three years which preceded the death of his father were the least productive in Ruskin's literary life. The three which followed it were among the most prolific. In 1861-2-3 he had written nothing except the Essays on Political Economy; he had sent no letters to the public press, and had given only two public lectures. In 1864-5-6 his public activity was very great. He published *Sesame and Lilies*, *The Ethics of the Dust*, and *The Crown of Wild Olive*. He wrote between twenty and thirty letters to the newspapers, and contributed a large number of miscellaneous articles to magazines; he lectured repeatedly to large audiences in great towns. The same multifarious activity continued in the years which followed. The death of his father meant much more to Ruskin than the death of a father in old age means to most sons in middle life. On the one hand, it deprived him of his closest friend and counsellor, and cast upon him duties and responsibilities from which he had hitherto been shielded. On the other hand, it removed restraints and trammels which have been described in earlier chapters. I shall deal in this chapter with his home life during the years 1864-5-6, and, in the next, with his literary and public activity.



## I

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Ruskin's father died on March 3, 1864, and he sent to some of his more intimate friends full accounts both of the last illness and of his own feelings in presence of his loss. It was characteristic of him that he spent little time in unavailing regrets, found nothing but impatient disgust in the trappings and the suits of woe, and was able to analyse with strict impartiality the account between his father and himself:—

(To MR. and MRS. BURNE-JONES.) “*March 4.*—I am at this moment more anxious about the effect upon *you* of this thing, than about anything else. . . . The *quite* wonderful thing to me is the way that it changes one's notions of the past character. I had often measured my feeling to my father, as I thought; but I never had any conception of the way that I should have to mourn—not over what I lose, now, but over what I *have* lost *until* now.”

(To H. W. ACLAND.) “*March 9.* . . . You are ‘one that hath had losses.’ But you never have had—nor with all your medical experience have you ever, probably, seen—the loss of a father who would have sacrificed his life for his son, and yet forced his son to sacrifice his life to him, and sacrifice it in vain. It is an exquisite piece of tragedy altogether—very much like *Lear*, in a ludicrous commercial way—*Cordelia* remaining unchanged and her friends writing to her afterwards—wasn't she sorry for the pain she had given her father by not speaking when she should?”

(To C. H. L. WOODD.) “*March 9.*—Many thanks for your letter. I thought you would like to come to this piece of business, as people think it respectful to see their friends buried. To me, it is, as it always has been of late years, one universal puzzle. To see you Christians as gay as larks while nothing touches you in your own affairs or friends—watching thousands of people massacred and tortured—helping to do it—selling them guns to shoot each other with, and talking civilities and protocols to men who are walking up to their loins in human blood. Presently God knocks you on the head with a coffin's end, and you suddenly perceive that something has gone wrong—scratch your heads—say—‘Dear me—here's one of *my* friends dead—really the world is a very sad

world. How very extraordinary ! let me improve the occasion !' CHAP.  
You are funny people—*vous autres*. I wish you were not coming V.  
or would not come to-morrow, for you are real friends—and I don't  
care to associate you always with the Undertaker's *Divina Com-*  
*media* ; however, if you must, you must. You will be glad to  
know my mother keeps well. If the snow holds, she won't even  
hear the wheels on the gravel."

Ruskin had at all times a horror of funerals and of mourning. His mother, to please him, wore no widow's cap, and fastened her black gown with a brooch of diamond and emerald.<sup>1</sup>

The tragi-comedy was played, and Ruskin set himself to work. Hitherto, his father's house and his father's purse had been free to him ; not without some resultant constraint and vexation, but also without the worry of business details. It seems from incidental allusions in Ruskin's letters that the father had been in the habit of placing to the son's bank account £1000 or £1500 a year ; this was Ruskin's ordinary revenue, in addition to such sums as he might receive from his publisher. But he had an extraordinary revenue also ; for, in the case of any special expenditure—as for pictures, or benevolent loans of an exceptionally large amount—he seems to have drawn on his father. The administration of the fortune now passed into the son's hands. His father had left to his wife £37,000 and the house at Denmark Hill for life ; and to his son £120,000, various leasehold and freehold properties, and his pictures, then valued at £10,000. There was much business to be done, investments to be considered, stocks to be realised, leases to be renewed ; and many of Ruskin's letters of this time are to his faithful friend, W. H. Harrison, who rendered him much help in such matters. But Ruskin was not an expert, and some of his investments were unfortunate. "My first performance," he said, in rendering account of his affairs, "was the investment of fifty thousand pounds in 'entirely safe' mortgages, which gave me five per cent. instead of three. I very soon, however, perceived it to be no less desirable, than

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. p. 278.

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V.

difficult, to get quit of these 'entirely safe' mortgages. I lost about twenty thousand pounds on them, altogether. In the second place, I thought it rather hard on my father's relations, that he should have left all his money to me only; and as I was very fond of some of them, indulged myself, and relieved my conscience at the same time, by giving seventeen thousand pounds to those I liked best. Money which has turned out to be quite rightly invested, and at a high interest; and has been fruitful to me of many good things, and much happiness."<sup>1</sup>

Next, there was his mother's way of life to be considered. She bore with stern composure the loss of the husband who had been her constant companion for nearly fifty years; but she was eighty-three years of age, and Ruskin felt that "there was immediate need for some companionship which might lighten the burden of the days to her."<sup>2</sup> It chanced that a young girl, the grand-daughter of Ruskin's paternal grandmother, came at this time on a visit to Denmark Hill. The old lady did not inspire this girl, as she did some other people, with awe; they became friends at first sight, and Ruskin fell no less under the spell of his cousin. He felt instinctively, he said, when he brought the girl to Denmark Hill, "that the gift, both to my mother and me, was one which we should not easily bear to be again withdrawn."<sup>3</sup> The "gift" was Miss Joan Agnew. She came for a week; she stayed for seven years—not leaving till she married Mr. Arthur Severn, and then remaining close at hand, in Ruskin's old house at Herne Hill. Of what Ruskin himself owed to her, he has partly told in the chapter of *Præterita* entitled "Joanna's Care"; of her care of his mother, he spoke in an earlier chapter when he described how "she came, when my father had been laid to his rest under Croydon hills, to keep her faithful watch by my mother's side, while I was seeking selfish happiness far away in work which to-day has come to nought."<sup>4</sup> Here, however, Ruskin does himself some injustice. With the exception of occasional

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 76 (1877).

<sup>2</sup> *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. § 232.

visits and lectures, he remained constantly with his mother at Denmark Hill from the beginning of 1864 to the spring of 1866.

CHAP.  
V.

## II

At this time a new element entered into his spiritual life which, though it perhaps left no very profound mark at the time, prepared the way for later developments. The polite world of the United States, of London, and of the European capitals, was now much interested and exercised about the *séances* of Daniel Dunglas Home, the spiritualist medium. His table-turnings, automatic writings, and "levitations" made a great impression. Literary men, politicians, and leaders of society attended his *séances*; many came away sceptical, others knew not what to think, while some were wholly convinced that Home had the key to an unknown force. Ruskin's friend, Mrs. Browning, was of the latter number, while Robert Browning, on the other hand, believed himself to have witnessed mere trickery. Among the votaries of the spiritualist faith was Mrs. Cowper-Temple, and through her Ruskin became an occasional visitor at Home's *séances*. An account of one of these occasions has been given by William Howitt. Home recited a poem given him by the spirit of Southey, and while he recited the table "seemed to beat time to the rhythm":—

"At the conclusion of the recitation," continues Howitt, "Mr. Ruskin asked whether he should recite a poem, and he was begged to do so. Whose the poem was I do not know, but it began with words to this effect: 'O Christ, save my soul, if Thou think'st it worth the saving.'<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Ruskin commenced his recitation, the table reversed its action. Mr. Ruskin sat on the opposite side to Mr. Home; and the table, rising on the opposite feet, beat time to the rhythm of this poem, too. When it had ceased, I asked whether any one had noticed a peculiar beating of the time, besides

<sup>1</sup> The poem was no doubt George Herbert's "Dialogue" (in *The Temple*), beginning "Sweetest Saviour, if my soul Were but worth

the having." Ruskin mentions it in *Præterita* (vol. ii. § 110) among pieces which he learnt by heart.



CHAP. that of the table-feet, namely, one with a metallic sound, as of a  
 V. small bar of steel struck upon the metal. ‘Yes,’ said Mr. Ruskin at once, ‘I know the meaning of that sound. It is descriptive of the state of my mind when I committed that poem to memory—when the earth was as iron and the heavens were as brass to me.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

On the strength of this anecdote, and of two friendly letters to Home,<sup>2</sup> which, however, are only of polite apologies, Ruskin has been claimed as more or less of a convert. That he (like so many other men and women of the time) was fascinated by Home’s personality, and that he was keenly interested in the manifestations, is clear; more than this cannot on the evidence be asserted. His letters to Mrs. Cowper, written after the *séance* described by Howitt, hardly strike the note of a convinced believer:—

“I am very grateful to you for having set me in the sight and hearing of this new world. I don’t see why one should be unhappy, about anything, if all this is indeed so. . . . I am not now more surprised at perceiving spiritual presence, than I have been, since I was a youth, at not perceiving it. The wonder lay always to me, not in miracle, but in the want of it; and now it is more the manner and triviality of manifestation than the fact that amazes me. On the whole I am much happier for it, and very anxious for next time; but there is something also profoundly pitiful, it seems to me, in all that we can conceive of spirits who can’t lift a ring without more trouble than Aladdin took to carry his palace, and I suppose you felt that their artistical powers appear decidedly limited. I mean to ask, next time, for the spirit of Paul Veronese, and see whether it, if it comes, can hold a pencil more than an inch long. . . . I was sorry not to have asked more questions of that disagreeable Bible-reading spirit. Partly, I was afraid of receiving some answer that would have hurt me, and partly I was dreamy and stupid with wonder—thinking more of the process of turning the table than of inquiring of an oracle, which, besides, I was not altogether clear about its being desirable to do. But if I get Paul Veronese to come, won’t I cross-examine him?”

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritual Magazine*, September 1872.

<sup>2</sup> They may be read in *D. D. Home’s Life*, 1888, pp. 214, 215.

To a devout believer like Mrs. Cowper, who was also his friend, Ruskin could not write less than sympathetically; yet this letter hardly shows that he had as yet been more than interested and surprised. At a later time, in periods of stress and sorrow, he was profoundly impressed, as we shall hear, by spiritualist phenomena.

### III

For the present, these experiences with the spiritualists seem to have been but a passing episode; Ruskin's constant thoughts were fixed on communion, in another kind, with the souls of the great and wise. He began a close study of Egyptian art and antiquities—a subject in which Wilkinson's book on *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* had already interested him. "When Ned begins again to paint," he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones (Denmark Hill, Sept. 13, 1864), "he must do some Egyptian things. Fancy the corselet of the King fastened by two Golden Hawks across his breast, stretching each a wing up to his shoulder, and his quiver of gold inlaid with enamel; and his bow-gauntlet of gold, and his helmet twined round with a golden asp, and all his chariot of divers colours, and his sash of 'divers colours of needlework on both sides,' and a leopard running beside him, and the Vulture of Victory over his head." Among Ruskin's note-books preserved at Brantwood is one devoted to notes, analyses, diagrams, and drawings of Egyptian art and mythology. His writings of this period contain also many references to Greek coins, which he studied in the British Museum, forming also a collection of his own. In the evenings he read to his mother—*Cranford* among other books. "She has read it about five times," he wrote to Mrs. Gaskell (Feb. 21, 1865); "but the first time I tried, I flew into a passion at Captain Brown's being killed and wouldn't go any further—but this time my mother coaxed me past it, and then I enjoyed it mightily. I do not know when I have read a more finished little piece of study of human nature."

## IV

CHAP.  
V.

Ruskin at this time saw many friends. Among them was Mr. Swinburne, whom he may often have met in Rossetti's studio, but with whom he was already acquainted through Lady Trevelyan. Among Ruskin's papers there is, in the poet's hand, showing a few small variations from the printed text, a copy of a song which afterwards appeared in *Poems and Ballads*. The song is "Before the Mirror: Verses written under a Picture. Inscribed to J. A. Whistler." With the song came the following letter which Mr. Swinburne gave me permission to print. It shows Whistler as an admirer of Ruskin's works; critical, however, and anxious to have things out. The proposed meeting did not, I believe, take place; perhaps, if it had, the two men might have understood each other better, and a stormy episode of later years have been averted:—

"22A DORSET STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE, *Aug.* 11 [1865].—MY DEAR RUSKIN,—I send you the song you asked for, finding that I can remember it after dinner. Nevertheless it has given me far more labour to recollect and transcribe than it did originally to compose. But your selection of it as a piece of work more satisfactory than usual gave me so much pleasure that I was determined to send it when I could. Since writing the verses (which were literally improvised and taken down on paper one Sunday morning after breakfast) I have been told more than once, and especially by Gabriel Rossetti, that they were better than the subject. Three or four days ago I had the good fortune to be able to look well over the picture which alone put them into my head, and came to the conclusion which I had drawn at first, that whatever merit my song may have, it is not so complete in beauty, in tenderness and significance, in exquisite execution and delicate strength as Whistler's picture. Whistler himself was the first critic who so far overpraised my verse as to rank it above his own painting. I stood up against him for himself, and will, of course, against all others.

"I am going to take Jones (unless I hear from Whistler to the contrary) on Sunday next in the afternoon to W.'s studio. I wish

you could accompany us. Whistler (as any artist worthy of his rank must be) is of course desirous to meet you, and to let you see his immediate work. As (I think) he has never met you, you will see that his desire to have it out with you face to face must spring simply from knowledge and appreciation of your own works. If this meeting cannot be managed, I must look forward to the chance of entrapping you into my chambers on my return to London. If I could get Whistler, Jones, and Howell to meet you, I think we might so far cozen the Supreme Powers as for once to realise a few not unpleasant hours.—Yours very sincerely,

“A. C. SWINBURNE.”

The publication of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 caused, among self-appointed censors of morals, a great commotion, and Ruskin had been appealed to by private friends to remonstrate with the young poet on the error of daring ways. He was not usually averse from reading moral lectures, but he utterly declined the presumption of endeavouring to set rules and limits to the genius of his friend:—

(To C. E. NORTON.) “Jan. 28, 1866.—Have you read Swinburne's *Atalanta*? The grandest thing ever yet done by a youth—though he is a Demoniack youth. Whether ever he will be clothed and in his right mind, heaven only knows. His foam at the mouth is fine, meantime.”

(To another Correspondent.) “14 Sept. '66.—He is infinitely above me in all knowledge and power, and I should no more think of advising or criticising him than of venturing to do it to Turner if he were alive again.”

(To the same.) “17 Sept. '66.—As for Swinburne not being my superior, he is simply one of the mightiest scholars of his age in Europe—knows Greek, Latin, and French as well as he knows English—can write splendid verse with equal ease in any of the four languages—knows nearly all the best literature of the four languages as well as I know—well—better than I know anything. And in power of imagination and understanding simply sweeps me away before him as a torrent does a pebble. I'm *righter* than he is—so are the lambs and the swallows, but they're not his match.”



CHAP.  
V.

Charles Augustus Howell, mentioned in Mr. Swinburne's letter, was a man of many parts and adventures. He was the son of an English father, his mother being a Portuguese lady of title, a direct descendant, it appears, of Boabdil il Chico, or as members of the Rossetti circle preferred to call him, "the cheeky." He had in his youth, as he used to tell, supported his mother and sisters by diving for treasures in a sunken galleon. His adventures lost nothing in his telling of them. Ford Madox Brown calls him "the Munchausen of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle,"<sup>1</sup> and his tales were the subject of a Limerick by Rossetti.<sup>2</sup> A man of remarkable assiduity, address, and humour, he fascinated alike Rossetti and Ruskin. By Ruskin he was employed for some time from 1865 onward as secretary and factotum, and he remained on intimate terms with Rossetti until 1876. Ruskin had long previously found reason to cease relations with him. A series of letters to Howell written in 1866 show him acting as almoner for Ruskin's charities. Ruskin had been one day to a Bird Show at the Crystal Palace, and was interested in the owner of a canary; Howell is instructed to go and give a sovereign for it, "in any name you like, *not* mine nor yours." The case of a poor shop-boy with a turn for art is brought to Ruskin's notice; Howell is entrusted with funds for finding decent lodgings for the boy, and getting him into some school of art. A "half-crazy old French lady" writes to Ruskin disclosing her sad "perdicament"; Howell is to make inquiries, and if he sees fit, to "advance her £20 without interest." Howell comes across some promising sketches by a lad; Ruskin "would like to be of any use he could to him." Very characteristic, too, is the scheme Ruskin devised for helping George Cruikshank, who in his old age had fallen into severe straits. Ruskin subscribed to the fund which was being collected to assist the old man; but he wanted to help him by work, as well as by charity. Howell was instructed to suggest to Cruikshank a series of plates to illustrate a volume of stories which Ruskin, with help from Burne-Jones and Rossetti, would

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Ford Madox Brown*, by F. M. Hueffer, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 495.

collect and edit. The scheme came to nought, for when some sample plates had been done for him by Cruikshank, Ruskin felt that the old man "can do fairy tales no more." So Ruskin had to content himself, instead, with remitting an old loan. Ruskin's charities, if always considerate, were sometimes what organisation societies call indiscriminate. "Whenever I want to give anybody a penny," he said, "I am obliged to look up and down the street first, to see if a clergyman's coming."<sup>1</sup> Some one asked him why he went on paying wages to a man who had grossly cheated and lied to him. "Well, you see," he said, "I cannot give him a character, and I cannot let him and his children starve."

CHAP.  
V.

## V

Ruskin's letters of advice and encouragement to artists and amateurs were as numerous as ever during this period of his life. There would be the tediousness of repetition in giving many examples of them; a consecutive series of letters to one such correspondent will perhaps convey a better idea of the trouble which he took in such cases. Miss Adelaide Ironside, to whom they were addressed, was born in Sydney in 1831, and, showing much talent in art, went to Europe with her mother in 1855 and settled in Rome. She was made much of by Gibson, the sculptor, and enjoyed considerable vogue in Rome both as a painter and as a spiritualistic medium.<sup>2</sup> She used, among other subjects, to paint visions which she had seen in crystal balls. It was perhaps through Joseph Severn that, on coming to London in 1865, she made Ruskin's acquaintance. "Full of nervous sensibility, she was the impersonation of genius; her mind was too active for the delicate frame in which it dwelt."<sup>3</sup> It may be gathered from this how sound was Ruskin's advice:—

DENMARK HILL, *about 1865*.—"DEAR MISS IRONSIDE,—The second shell is much better than the first; quite right, I think,

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 4.

by William Sharp, pp. 261, 266, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Mentions of her in both capacities will be found in *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*,

<sup>3</sup> *The Catholic Press* (Sydney), Feb. 3, 1900.

CHAP. in the perspective of spiral—this is a great gain already, and I  
V. understand all the talk in your letters. The first thing you have to do is to get sleepy. Nothing can be done with shaky hands and beating heart. There is no occasion for either. You have plenty of time and power and good-will. Only don't torment yourself, and you will soon find things go smoothly."

"WINNINGTON HALL, *2nd June*, 1865.—I was hindered from calling on Wednesday. . . . Draw the cast first at a foot or a foot and a half from the eye, then at three feet. Notice the differences in outline produced by the distance. Shade it in perfect subordination of the parts to the rounding of the whole mass. . . . The wrinkles of a shell are the best introduction to the treatment of the hair in great sculpture and painting, those of a shell being more simply concurrent and orderly."

"DENMARK HILL.—MY DEAR CHILD,—I can't see you to-day—I've to go into town—nor is it worth while to teach in such weather as it is likely to be for a day or two. Here's a Dürer book. Draw anything you like out of it with the pen—the Madonna at page 24, to begin with. Remember all the lines are drawn with a deliberate freedom. Even the flourishes are made calmly, with intention throughout. I want to cure you of your slovenly way of seeing things in a hurry. Never do one touch in a hurry any more."

"DENMARK HILL.—Don't work too eagerly at the shell. It will beat you—and I knew that it would—that is all right, and I am ever so glad that you know when you are beaten. Then one is sure to get on, but if you had written me that you had done the shell six times over triumphantly, I should have had no more hope of you. Work at it quietly, being satisfied with finding out the difficulties—the conquering will come in due time. . . ."

"DENMARK HILL.—You shall come here if you like. I think it will be better; and if you're too fireworky I'll give some ice cream; but do be good and quiet—or you'll kill yourself, and then you'll never be able to draw shell nor faces neither, for I suppose there isn't any shade on those blessed angels—or else they're all charcoal, even when they come upstairs—and one couldn't draw them either way."

"DENMARK HILL, *8th July*, 1865.—It is partly the state of your health, partly the excitement in which you have continually

lived, which make it so difficult for you now to be quiet. Remember, the quieter you can keep, the more the fire (what fire is within you) will achieve, and the longer it will last. I think I shall be able to be of some use to you in the way you tell me.”

CHAP.  
V.

Young and ardent disciples were often received at Denmark Hill. An account of one such visit,<sup>1</sup> though it refers to a somewhat later date, gives an impression of Ruskin's home life as pleasantly characteristic as it is vivid. The writer was the late Miss R. S. Roberts. She had made a collection of rare mosses of the Lake District, which she had sent, on an introduction from the Richmonds, to Ruskin:—

“Not that I am ever likely to forget the 16th of November 1869, but it will be such a pleasure to me to write the particulars of that bright day. . . . I followed my conductor upstairs, and found myself in John Ruskin's study. Taking my hand in both his, and with many kind words of greeting, he at once made me feel at ease and at home. Of course, older and more worn and thin than the portrait in the *Selections*, but the same beautiful face, the deep blue earnest kindly eyes, light brown hair, worn rather long, and wonderfully expressive mouth. After welcoming me and saying he was glad to see me, and all such kind and gracious things, he said, ‘But I was going to say I am disappointed in you. I expected to see you bronzed with the sun—hearty and robust—what I should expect from a young lady who lives in the country and takes long walks in search of mosses and flowers—but you look delicate.’ Then he said he had a poor little school girl, whom he was trying to help, in another room—she was just going. . . . I had protested against staying to lunch—said I would not stay and take up his precious time; but he would not hear of my going—said lunch was ordered at two, and we had an *hour* before us. Ah me! When I heard those words, and found myself sitting in a chair he placed and drew forward for me, it seemed too good to be real indeed; all through I was in a dream, a beautiful dream, which now I am trying to put on paper—but I cannot do it. As

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<sup>1</sup> Communicated by Mrs. Charles Lowry, School House, Sedbergh; a niece of Miss Roberts.



CHAP. V. if it were possible for *me* to write down *his* conversation—it can only be the merest *shadow* of the good thing itself. He first said, ‘So you are fond of botany and flowers?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘not of botany. I love flowers, but I know nothing of botany.’ ‘But,’ he answered, ‘you sent me the names of fungi—how did you get them?’ I told him ‘from Mrs. Loudon.’ He said, ‘I have all the books necessary, but it takes me so much time, say, to look through five or six volumes, for the name of one little fungus.’ Then he went on in a most beautiful strain to describe a kind of society he wished to form of right-minded, right-hearted people—men and women who would determine to try and do some *good* in the world; girls were all for vanity, or men for avarice, getting *more, more*. He wanted people to be *content* with what they had, and to live simply, and every day to do some good. Then he gave me his ideas of a scheme for benefiting the Swiss people. ‘I am thinking so much just now about the beauty and worth of the *rain* from heaven. We are apt to think of the *sun* as everything to us, but what would our earth be but for the rain?’ ‘He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ But see in the Swiss valleys, the valley of the Rhone, and the town of Sion and others devastated by mountain torrents—whole villages swept away, and once fertile lands laid low with fever from the stagnant water left.’ Then he tracked the tiny stream to its source up the mountain. *There*, in its infancy, the mountain stream was easily controlled—you could guide it, lead it where and how you would. So, he said, let each house—the chalets up the sides of the mountains—let each make an embankment of turf round a pond which they must dig out in the course of one tiny stream, and so *catch* it and keep it there—it would be *wealth* to them in time of drought. How eagerly men would rush to the ends of the earth to dig gold, but they think nothing of this rain gold—‘it *is* gold. But,’ he said, ‘I mean to write to the Alpine Club and lay the plan before them.’<sup>1</sup> . . . Then he showed me the original of one of the drawings in *Modern Painters*—a lovely branch, I quite remembered it in the book. This was framed, as were others—pencil drawings, with slight colouring on the stem—a little flake white, then some serpents’ and birds’ heads—evidently studies for *Queen of the Air*—and a lovely woman’s

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 163.

face. Then he went to the window and lifted up the shelf of what would be the sill, and it seemed fitted up for these pictures. What he took out was one with two pages of an ancient missal, but also the letters were serpent-like, forked and wicked-looking, yet this was designed when the Christian faith was strong and pure."

This was a morning at Denmark Hill, as readers of Ruskin's books will realise, with the author of *Sesame and Lilies* and *The Ethics of the Dust*.

## VI

Around his house at Denmark Hill, there were seven acres of ground, and some of the happiest hours of his life were spent in the gardens. In the last piece which came from his pen<sup>1</sup> he recalled them:—

"I draw back to my own home, twenty years ago, permitted to thank Heaven once more for the peace, and hope, and loveliness of it, and the Elysian walks with Joanie, and Paradisiacal with Rosie, under the peach-blossom branches by the little glittering stream which I had paved with crystal for them. I had built behind the highest cluster of laurels a reservoir, from which, on sunny afternoons, I could let a quite rippling film of water run for a couple of hours down behind the hayfield, where the grass in spring still grew fresh and deep. There used to be always a corn-crake or two in it. Twilight after twilight I have hunted that bird, and never once got glimpse of it: the voice was always at the other side of the field, or in the inscrutable air or earth. And the little stream had its falls, and pools, and imaginary lakes. Here and there it laid for itself lines of graceful sand; there and here it lost itself under beads of chalcedony. It wasn't the Liffey, nor the Nith, nor the Wandel; but the two girls were surely a little cruel to call it 'The Gutter'! Happiest times, for all of us, that ever were to be; not but that Joanie and her Arthur are giddy enough, both of them yet, with their five little ones, but they have been sorely anxious about me, and I have been sorrowful enough for myself, since ever I lost sight of that peach-blossom avenue.

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<sup>1</sup> The final chapter of *Præterita* (1889).

CHAP. Eden-land ' Rosie calls it sometimes in her letters. Whether its  
V. tiny river were of the waters of Abana, or Euphrates, or Thamesis, I know not, but they were sweeter to my thirst than the fountains of Trevi or Branda.”

“Paradisiacal walks with Rosie.” “I'll come on Monday,” he wrote to Burne-Jones (1866), “Proserpine permitting. Did you see the gleam of sunshine yesterday afternoon? If you had only seen her in it, bareheaded, between *my* laurels and *my* primrose bank!” A relationship which began as that of teacher to pupil was passing into that of the lover. In the earlier chapters we have heard of their first acquaintance, of his lessons, of the growth of a deeper feeling. In Rose La Touche he began to see in imagination the perfect flower of womanly culture. In the child's letter from her, printed in *Præterita*, a note of precocity will, though Ruskin denied it, strike many readers. This did not escape the shrewd eyes of Ruskin's mother, who warned her son against the danger of over-pressure. But he had his theories, and set himself, among other things, to teach her Greek verses by correspondence. He was bent on training his pet in the ways that his ideal woman should follow. His play with her was more wholesome, perhaps, than the Greek verbs. When her mother was in London, he would call and spend an afternoon with the children in the nursery; telling them stories, or drawing pictures. There was a blind crossing-sweeper, an Irishman, whose station was near Mrs. La Touche's house in Norfolk Street, and for some years Mr. Allen was commissioned by Ruskin to make various gifts to this “Billy Corcoran.” In summer days the children would come out to Denmark Hill; to play in the garden, or be shown the wonders of the frames and cabinets. In 1861 Ruskin had paid his first visit to Mr. and Mrs. La Touche in Ireland (p. 36). Those were golden days for the children, when Ruskin took them out for walks, or paddles in the Liffey, which runs through the park at Harristown, or begged off formal lessons on their behalf in favour of talks about flowers or stones or clouds. Rosie was but thirteen, but she had “such queer

little fits sometimes, like patience on a monument. She walked like a little white statue through the twilight woods, talking solemnly.”<sup>1</sup> Papa and mamma sometimes went out to dinner, and then the children held high carnival with their friend—pretending to be lords and ladies, with him to read “a canto of *Marmion*” to them. When he went away he wrote to Rosie in beautiful letters of mingled play and earnestness,<sup>2</sup> or in little rhymes:—

“ Rosie, Rosie—Rosie rare,  
Rocks and woods and clouds and air  
Are all the colour of my pet,  
And yet, and yet, and yet, and yet  
She is not here, but where ? ”

Or, again, from Lucerne :—

“ Rosie, pet, and Rosie, puss,  
See, the moonlight’s on the Reuss :  
O’er the Alps the clouds lie loose,  
Tossed about in silver tangles,  
In and out through all the angles,  
Some obtuse and some acute ;  
Lakelet waves, though crisped, are mute,  
Only seen by moving spangles.  
But, underneath, the Porter wrangles  
With English wight who German mangles  
And all the bells break out in jangles ;  
For here in old Lucerne the times  
Of night and day are taught with chimes  
And moralled in metallic rhymes,  
And divers sorts of tingle-tangles,—  
Hark, the watch-tower answers sprightly,  
Saying, if I hear it rightly,  
‘ Good night, Liffey ; bad night, Reuss—  
Good night, Rosie, Posie, Puss.’ ”

The child of thirteen and the man who petted her were

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Ruskin to his father (September 2, 1861).

<sup>2</sup> One such letter, too long for

insertion here, may be read in the Library Edition, vol. xxxvii. pp.

368–371.



CHAP. "half a life asunder"; but the child treasured his letters, and  
V. told him so, prettily enough for a maiden of older years:—

"I got your letter," she wrote (in a letter which he copied out for his father and mother to see), "just as I was going out riding. So I could only give it one peep, and then tucked it into my riding-habit pocket and pinned it down, so that it could be talking to me while I was riding. I had to shut up my mouth so tight when I met Mama, for she would have taken it and read it if I'd told her, and it wouldn't have gone on riding with me. As it was, we ran rather a chance of me and pocket and letter and all being suddenly lodged in a stubble-field, for Swallow (that's Emily's animal that I always ride now) was in such tremendous spirits about having your handwriting on his back that he took to kicking and jumping in such a way, till I felt like a Stormy Petrel riding a great wave, so you may imagine I could not spare a hand to unpin my dear pocket, and had to wait in patience, till Swallow had done 'flying, flying South,' and we were safe home again."

Did child of thirteen ever write a sweeter letter? Could guide, philosopher, and friend, such as Ruskin was, have ever seen rosebud opening with richer promise? All the lovely fancies, all the "vital feelings of delight," which were associated with his ideal of girlhood were seen unfolding in his little Irish pupil.

The girl, even in her teens, was deeply religious, and, though she learnt much and gladly from her friend, she was perturbed not a little about his soul. "Little Rosie," he wrote to Professor Norton (June 2, 1861), "is terribly frightened about me, and writes letters to get me to come out of Bye-path Meadow—and I won't; she can't write any more just now, for she's given herself rheumatism in her fingers by dabbling all day in her hill river, catching crayfish." Among the materials which were put in type for the intended continuation of *Præterita* is a letter written from Rosie in London to Ruskin at Lucerne. Some extracts from it will show how religious yearning was mingled with the affectionate admiration which she felt towards him:—

"It is the day after Christmas Day and I have just got my Christmas letter; and though I don't know your address, I have

been wanting to write to you so much that I am answering it directly—and first St. C.<sup>1</sup> you know you shdn't write to me when you ought to be getting yourself warm; couldn't you have thought of me just as well running up a hill and getting nice and warm, like a good St. Crumpet, than sitting cold writing; you know you needn't write to tell me you have not forgotten me, need you St. C.? and yet I can't help saying I was looking for a letter, I wanted so much to know what you were doing and thinking (I mean a very little bit of it) this Christmas. . . . I have told you I can see some things quite plain, and I have been living at Lucerne all Christmas week; am I not there still, talking to you, though I didn't 'yowl.' You know I only call 'yowling' feeling like a dog with his nose up in the air outside a shut door, because some one has kicked, or perhaps because some one has not stroked you. Yowling is only for self; I do not call it yowling to be sorry for those who are suffering, yowling is only right sometimes, but there is *always* something to be sorrowful about for other people—*sometimes* also a great deal to be yowful about for self, and even in Christmas times. But I did *not* yowl about Harristown, hardly thought about it, it was almost all Lucerne, only just dreamt about home and our cats and the people last night, and that was somehow joined on to a dream about you. So our thoughts are crossing I suppose St. C., and I thought particularly the day before Xmas, and Xmas day evening, is it not curious? . . . I was sitting on my table opposite to the window where I looked straight at the dark night, and one star Venus glowing straight in front. When I leant my head a little I could see the long line of lamp lights with a sort of bright haze over them getting smaller in the distance, but Venus was the brightest light of all. I did not see Orion, or any other star, only her. And then I was thinking of you; it made me think of the guide of the wise men, His star in the East, only this shone in the West. She looked down so brightly over the gaslights as if it was intended we should see how much purer and brighter, though at such—such—a distance, is the Heavenly light if we would only look for it, than our rows of yellow gaslights that we think so much of. Yes, we have a strange Peace on earth,

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<sup>1</sup> "St. C." (St. Crumpet or St. Chrysostom at choice) was the children's name for Ruskin.

CHAP. V. because earth or its inhabitants do not all of them like the Peace that our Prince can give, do not all want it, do not all believe in it. Some think that Pleasure is Peace, and seek it for themselves ; some think that following Satan is Peace, and some think there is no Peace given on earth, that God gives work to do and strength to do it, sore with sorrow and pain, but peace is only in heaven . . . but they are ready to give up their lives in His service, and live without joy, if it is His will. They are faithful, noble souls, but though they could die for God, they are beaten back and tossed with the waves of temptation and sorrow ; they will not believe in the hope and joyful parts of Christianity and by rejecting God as the Comforter they reject all Peace. I believe we don't *believe* in that Peace rightly——”

And then she goes on to send him a selection of texts. He and she were not to find earthly peace ; but in after years, he often derived support and comfort from “Rosie’s texts” in a Bible which she had given him.

Thus for some years the idyll continued, until the girl ripened into the woman. Rosie’s sister had married in 1865, and henceforward Ruskin had seen the younger girl shining by her own separate light. Ruskin and Rosie met often in London ; sometimes also at Lady Mount-Temple’s, at Broadlands. The day came, in 1866, when he told his love, and acquainted her parents with his hope to make her his wife. Rosie herself, though her girl’s heart can hardly have been unprepared, was irresolute. She showed no attraction towards any one else, and her affection for her master was strong, but she manifested no such clear and definite readiness to accept Ruskin’s proposal as should overcome the reluctance of her parents. The least that their duty seemed to command was to interpose a period of delay. Rosie at the time was not yet of full age, and it was agreed that she and Ruskin should not meet for a while. He was to wait three years, Rosie had said ; she would then be twenty-one, and would give her answer. Ruskin was in the habit, as we have seen, of numbering his days, and his diaries at this time count them as they diminished towards the appointed year.

## CHAPTER VI

### *SESAME AND LILIES—THE CROWN OF WILD OLIVE—THE ETHICS OF THE DUST*

(1865, 1866)

“I have seceded from the study not only of architecture, but nearly of all art; and have given myself, as I would in a besieged city, to seek the best modes of getting bread and water for its multitudes, there remaining no question, it seems to me, of other than such grave business for the time.”—*The Study of Architecture* (1865).

THE phase of Ruskin's literary activity which followed the death of his father took the form of lectures and letters. The impulse towards the platform returned strongly upon him after a period of seclusion; he wanted once more to have his audience face to face, and to rouse them, if he might, to a sense of the evils which was burning within him. The manifold lectures, speeches, articles, and books, which he now poured forth, tell of abounding activity and untiring industry; but the work is very discursive. He talks and writes of books and how to read them; of the sphere and education of women; of soldiers and their duties; architects and their functions; servants and their loyalties; masters and their duties. He discusses now the elements of crystallisation or porches of Abbeville; and now the rights and wrongs of the Jamaica insurrection or the policy of non-intervention in European quarrels. He passes from the designs upon Greek coins to the management of railways and the prospects of co-operative industry.

#### I

The wide range over which he travelled at this time was due not only to an intellectual and artistic curiosity, as



CHAP.  
VI.

boundless as it was desultory; it was caused also by the conflict which had now become chronic between two sides of his nature. "I am essentially," he writes at one time, "a painter and a leaf dissector. . . . My right work is to be out among the budding banks and hedges, outlining sprays of hawthorn and clusters of primrose." And so, he was always intending that this piece of writing or that should "close his political work for many a day."<sup>1</sup> But at other times the political side won the battle. "I am weary of all writing and speaking about art," he told the architects in 1865. Each side was defeated in turn. Having declared his secession from the study of architecture, he went to Abbeville to analyse and draw "the flamboyant architecture of the valley of the Somme"; having "closed his political work for many a day" in 1867, he threw himself into it with particular energy in 1868. But if there was no complete victory for either side, there was a certain reconciliation. His proper work of "outlining sprays of hawthorn" went on, but more and more he became insistent upon the foundation of noble art in ethical conditions. This was the topic, as well as the title, of his Rede Lecture at Cambridge in 1867,<sup>2</sup> which may be taken as the central work, in that field, of the years now under consideration. One sees the same overmastering moral impulse even in some of Ruskin's scientific studies. It was the *Ethics* of the Dust that he invited his readers to study; the "Crystal Virtues" and the "Crystal Rest" were the chief of "the elements of crystallisation" which he taught "to little housewives." And so, again, though his proper work, in science and in art, was not allowed to drop, he was yet continually impelled to carry forward his social and political teaching, applying its lessons to fresh fields, or proclaiming it, in different language, to new audiences. He has himself noted, in a retrospect of his literary life, the connexion between one of the books with which we are concerned in the present chapter, and the economic writings of earlier years. "The wealth of a country is *in* its good men and women, and in nothing else. . . . This is first, and more or less eloquently, stated

<sup>1</sup> *Time and Tide*, §§ 117, 69.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 122.

in the close of the chapter, called the Veins of Wealth, of *Unto this Last*; and is scientifically, and in sifted terms, explained and enforced in *Munera Pulveris*. . . . It is taught, with all the faculty that I am possessed of, in *Sesame and Lilies*, that in a state of society in which men and women are as good as they can be, (under mortal limitation,) the women will be the guiding and purifying power."<sup>1</sup>

So much for the general principles which informed Ruskin's work at this time. Some of the particular subjects which he took up in his books, lectures, and letters of this period must also be recalled. He has in them much to say of books, and pleads for the establishment of public libraries "in every considerable city."<sup>2</sup> In these days of municipal enterprise and private munificence such pleading sounds familiar, and, in part, superfluous. But, writing fifty years ago, Ruskin had to support his plea as savouring of the paradoxical and impracticable. So, again, on the subject of women's education—in these days of High Schools, Higher Colleges, University Colleges and degrees—Ruskin may seem behind, rather than in front of, the times; but it was not so in the days when he wrote that "a girl's education should be nearly in its course and material of study the same as a boy's,"<sup>3</sup> and when, alike in practice and in precept, he strove to increase the range and depth of teaching in "Seminaries for young ladies." His appeals to the hearts and consciences of readers, in the matter of the housing of the working-classes, will never, perhaps, be out of date; for while each generation somewhat raises its standard, each also falls short of it. But when Ruskin wrote *Sesame and Lilies* in 1864, legislation to improve the conditions of the Public Health and facilitate the provision of better houses was still some way off. It was in the year of *Sesame and Lilies* that Disraeli suggested, as a variant upon the words of the wise King of Israel, "Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas"; but the Public Health

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 90. This function of women is also the subject of several pages of *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

<sup>2</sup> *Sesame and Lilies*, § 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, § 74.

CHAP. VI. Act and the Artisans' Dwellings Act were not passed till 1875. With regard to the relations of capital and labour, the Trade Union Act, which gave freedom to labour combinations, dates from 1871; and, lastly, it was only in 1870 that the State set itself to establish a general and national system of elementary education. These dates should be borne in mind in reading Ruskin's references to social questions in the 'sixties.

## II

*Sesame and Lilies*, first published in June 1865, took at once the place which it has ever since occupied of the most popular of Ruskin's books. *Modern Painters* has had its thousands of readers; *Sesame and Lilies*, its hundreds of thousands. The book has circulated in paper covers at a penny, and been bound in gold and vellum. It has been conned in print by schoolboys, and written out in manuscript by brilliant women. The bibliography of it fills fourteen octavo pages. It has been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish. It has been made a school-book, and "Notes," "Handbooks," "Companions" have been devoted to it. The fame which *Sesame and Lilies* has thus obtained among the many has been approved by the wise. It is "a pearly book," wrote Coventry Patmore to Ruskin. "In *Sesame and Lilies*," says Leslie Stephen, "Ruskin's style was at its best. He can still be as eloquent as of old, though less ornate; and, though the argument wanders a little, he manages to give a regular and concentrated expression of his real convictions."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin himself was, both in the blame and in the praise, of Stephen's opinion. The lectures, he said, on revision of the book in later years, are fragmentary and ill-arranged;<sup>2</sup> but on the other hand "they contain," he added, "if read in connexion with *Unto this Last*, the chief truths I have endeavoured to display"; it "tells everything I know of vital truth";<sup>3</sup> it was written "with all the faculty I am possessed of."

<sup>1</sup> *National Review*, April 1900.

<sup>3</sup> Preface to edition of 1882; and

<sup>2</sup> Preface to edition of 1871, § 5. *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 58 and 90.

The book, though carefully revised, was written for oral delivery. The first lecture was delivered at the Rushholme Town Hall near Manchester, in aid of a fund for a public library. The subject was thus appropriate to the occasion, the "Kings' Treasuries" of which Ruskin spoke being libraries of good books. The second lecture was delivered a week later at the Town Hall, and was in aid of a fund for additional schools. On the same visit to Manchester Ruskin was invited by Mr. Walker, the High Master, to address the boys of the Grammar School. On such occasions addresses of good advice from eminent men are very much of one pattern; but Ruskin illustrated the familiar theme by an ingenious parallel from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. "The architect," he said, "did not build it so on purpose. The foundation was laid on soft, unequal ground, and when the first storey was erected the building began to incline a little. The architect strove to remedy this step by step, and the result was the building as it can now be seen. It was so in life,—begin on a faulty foundation, and all would go crooked; while, if the foundation were right, our course would be straight." <sup>1</sup>

The titles "Sesame" and "Lilies," given to lectures on the influence of good books and of good women respectively, were pieces of Ruskin's shorthand. I have read disputations as to which of various possible meanings Ruskin meant by "Sesame." The truth is that he meant them all. By the first title he meant to indicate that his lecture dealt with the cultivation of the spirit which opens the door to the secrets of good literature. He who can read a true book aright has an "open Sesame" to audiences with the great and wise of all time. The key which unlocks the door has many wards—such as diligence, an understanding heart, and, above all, a sympathetic imagination. This is "the open Sesame of a huge, obscure, endless cave, with inexhaustible treasure of pure gold scattered in it; the wandering about and gathering of the pieces may be left to any of us—all can accomplish that; but the first opening of that invisible door in the rock is of the imagination only." The sub-title of the

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Examiner*, Dec. 8, 1864.



CHAP. VI. lecture, "Of Kings' Treasuries," fits in with this meaning of "Sesame"; but Ruskin had another train of thought in his mind, as indicated by a motto from Lucian which he inserted in one edition of the book: "You shall each have a cake of sesame, and ten pound." The sesame-cake is promised, in Lucian's Dialogue of *The Fishermen*, as a bait to the philosophers. Ruskin in a marked copy of this book refers also to the *Birds* of Aristophanes, in which the Hoopoe, in describing their ideal community, explains that they "live without a purse" and "feed in gardens on white sesame grains." It is to the simpler life, far removed from the restless pursuit of material wealth, that Ruskin summons all those who hear him; and thus we may find in this book a connexion with *The Eagle's Nest*: "None of us yet know, for none of us have yet been taught in early youth, what fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought—proof against all adversity: bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us—houses, built without hands, for our souls to live in." It is such a treasure-house that, by consent of readers during five decades, Ruskin himself built in *Sesame and Lilies*.

All this play of allusive fancy, in titles and mottoes, was very characteristic of Ruskin; and so also is the transition in the lecture itself from books to social conditions. He begins by saying that, life being very short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books, seeking audience only of the good and great; and that valuable books should, in a civilised country, be within reach of every one. He goes on to give hints about the right way of reading; and by abrupt transition asks "why any of us should talk about reading?" "We want some sharper discipline." And then follows an indictment of the materialism and lack of compassion of his age. This famous piece of denunciation is, I suppose, among the best known passages in his works. And it was the passage which he had most at heart. "I've got some Billingsgate spoken out in the first lecture," he wrote to Patmore,

“ which relieves one’s mind, like swearing, even when there’s nobody to hear.” And so, from Manchester, after the second lecture, to Lady Trevelyan (Dec. 15): “ I got on very well last night, speaking with good loud voice for an hour and a quarter, or a little more—reading, I should say, for I can’t speak but when I am excited. I gave them one extempore bit about Circassian Exodus, which seemed to hit them a little as far as Manchester people can be hit.” When he came to publish the lectures, he sought to “ hit ” his readers in another way—printing the pages, which described the misery of the slums, “ blood-red, to try if I could catch the eye at least, when I could not the ear or the heart.”<sup>1</sup>

The title of the second lecture—“ Lilies: Of Queens’ Gardens ”—is simple. The territory over which a good woman exerts her sway is as the garden of a Queen; the Lily, emblem of purity, is the sceptre of her rule—type of the pure influence which she may wield both at home and in the world. For her “ the Lily whispers, I wait ”; “ the path of a good woman is indeed strewn with flowers, but they rise behind her steps, not before them. ‘ Her feet have touched the meadows, and left the daisies rosy.’ ” The words in Ruskin’s lecture that followed this quotation from *Maud* did not please Tennyson. “ You think that only a lover’s fancy;—false and vain! How if it could be true?” Ruskin thus treated the passage as an illustration of what in *Modern Painters* he had called “ The Pathetic Fallacy ” in poetry. But, said the poet when he read *Sesame*, “ the very day I wrote the lines I saw the daisies rosy in Maiden’s Croft, and thought of enclosing one to Ruskin labelled ‘ A Pathetic Fallacy.’ ”<sup>2</sup> Of the main subject of the lecture on “ Lilies,” I have said something at the beginning of this chapter; but here again it was the practical conclusion, the hortative appeal, that Ruskin had most at heart. He had read a report upon the miserable ignorance disclosed in a school in Wales. “ Oh, ye women of England! from the Princess of that Wales to the simplest of you, do you think your own children can be brought into their true fold of rest, while

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoir* of Tennyson, by his Son, vol. i. p. 511.

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*Sesame and Lilies* did not escape some severe criticisms in the press. Anthony Trollope found it "hardly to be borne," though admitting that "the words are often arranged with surpassing beauty";<sup>3</sup> and the *Saturday Review* thought that "a more appropriate title for such a farrago would have been *Thistles and Dead-Sea Apples; or Fools' Paradises and Wise Men's Purgatories*." But Patmore's word is likely to stand; it is a "pearly" book. The thread, though slight, exists; and it connects something else than the pearls which it strings together. It connects Ruskin's earlier and later work. The world of beauty, the treasuries of noble books, the development of the individual soul: yes, these were worth all the illustration and study which Ruskin had given to them; but they were henceforth to be comprehended, and ennobled, in a larger range of survey, looking to the development of the nation. But whatever may be thought about Ruskin's main teaching in the book, how rich it is in separate "pearls"! Was Patmore thinking, I wonder, of a passage in *Sartor Resartus*: "A very Sea of Thought; neither calm nor clear, if you will, yet wherein the toughest pearl-diver may dive to his utmost depth, and return not only with sea-wreck but with true

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 58.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to the edition of 1871. That edition was dedicated to " $\phi\lambda\eta$ ," who in various popular biographies of Ruskin is identified with Miss Rose La Touche. This is a mistake. "*Lilies*" was written for her; but  $\phi\lambda\eta$  was Ruskin's name for Lady Mount-Temple,

and it is to her—as "the friend who aided me in chief sorrow"—that the edition of *Sesame and Lilies* in 1871 was dedicated (see the Preface of 1871 to *Munera Pulveris*).

<sup>3</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, July 15, 1865.

orients"? The description of books as a gentle society waiting to gain an audience, the phrase "masked words," the analysis of a piece of Milton, the memorable passage about the true functions of bishops or over-seers, the discussion of Shakespeare's heroines: these are among the pearly passages in the book which, in carrying Ruskin's writings into new circles, have proved stimulating and suggestive to many thousands of readers.

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### III

Another book of the same date which won immediate popularity was *The Crown of Wild Olive*. This also was made up of lectures—the first, delivered at Camberwell in January 1865 on "Work"; the second, at Bradford in April 1864, on "Traffic"; the third, at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, in February 1866. The third lecture, on the ethics of War, is among Ruskin's least conclusive pieces. The subject was one, as he afterwards said,<sup>1</sup> with regard to which he felt drawn in opposite directions; being impressed on the one side with the noble discipline of war and with the historical fact that war has been the foundation of art; yet being convinced on the other that war is opposed to the dictates of Christianity, causes "an incalculable amount of avoidable human suffering," and is too often waged from ignoble motives and for ignoble ends. Ruskin framed for himself a working reconciliation. To nearly every actual war he was opposed; to the wars that were not waged he was sympathetic. And so, again, the actual methods of modern warfare he denounced as barbarous; but he exhorted his hearers, perhaps half in play, to go into naval battle with oars and galleys, and into the field with the weapons of the Middle Ages or of the heroic age of Greece. In the two earlier lectures, Ruskin went over old ground; but the book attracted new readers to it. It should be remembered that his former books—*Modern Painters*, *Seven Lamps*, *The Stones of Venice*—were, as

<sup>1</sup> Appendix added to *Crown of Wild Olive* in 1873.



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originally published, very costly. *Unto this Last* was cheap enough, but failed at the time to win any public. It was the publication of *Sesame and Lilies* (3s. 6d.) and *The Crown of Wild Olive* (5s.) which first made Ruskin a popular writer, in the sense of one who commanded a large attention among the many.

In publishing the three lectures he added a Preface, or Introduction, which is of particular interest, not only as emphasising many of his economic doctrines, but as containing a characteristic expression of the religious phase through which he was passing at the time. The passage which ends the Preface is among the most beautiful in his writings, and it reflects his mood and temper at the present period of his life. "It is a difficult thing," he had written a few years before, "to live without hope of another world . . . ; but by how much the more difficult, by so much it makes one braver and stronger."<sup>1</sup> It is to this bravery and strength that he here calls his readers; not, indeed, wholly accepting the agnostic attitude, but pleading that "fate may be bravely met, and conduct wisely ordered on either expectation." And so, the title of his book took in his mind a double meaning, summing up alike its economic and its moral doctrine. The motto on the title-page comes from "a grand passage"<sup>2</sup> in the *Plutus* of Aristophanes. "Poverty" is speaking:—

"But verily ye are both purblind with old prejudices that blear the mind's eye; Zeus, of course, is poor, and this I will now clearly show you. For if he were rich, how is it that when he himself institutes the Olympic contest, in order that he may always bring together all the Greeks in each fifth year, he proclaimed that those of the athletes who won the prize should be wreathed with *the crown of wild olive*? And indeed it should have been of gold, had not Zeus been so poor."

So, then, the reward for which honest men strive is honour, not riches; the crown for which brave men have lived and died, and yet may nobly live and die, need not be, as in a

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> See *Unto this Last*, § 65.

poet's vision, "with harps, palms, wedding-garments, kiss of peace, and crowned and haloed hair"; it may be but of wild olive, "mixed with grey leaf and thorn-cut stem," yet sweet for the victory by which it has been won. "Type of grey honour, and sweet rest," Ruskin calls his wreath of wild olive: "serviceable for the life which now is; nor, it may be, without promise of that which is to come." The book rapidly established itself in public favour, and in the following year received a public compliment. Ruskin was given an Honorary Degree at Cambridge, and the Public Orator "dwelt more on *The Crown of Wild Olive* than on any other of my books"—so Ruskin reported to his mother.

## IV

Ruskin's views obtained further circulation by the letters which during these years he addressed to the newspapers. In 1864 he attacked "the law" of supply and demand in a series of letters to the *Daily Telegraph*; in 1865 he had a long controversy with the *Pall Mall Gazette* on Work and Wages; in the same year a popular discussion in the *Telegraph* on the eternal Servant Question gave him an opening for pointing an economic moral. He hit hard in such discussions, and the almost single-handed contest which he waged at this time with the accepted creed in economics did much to call attention to theories and principles which he had closely at heart. During the same years he addressed frequent letters to the newspapers on Foreign Policy, and his opinions on these subjects—the Italian question, the Polish question, the Danish question—colour many a page in his books of the time. In that era of European confusion, "the English Cabinet," says Gladstone's biographer, "found no powerful or noble part to play."<sup>1</sup> To Ruskin, writing in the midst of the events, the part of inaction seemed the more ignoble from its contrast with other scenes—such as the operations against China and Japan—in which the English Government did play an active part. Into the merits of these various policies

Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. p. 115.

CHAP. VI. of action and inaction, this is no occasion for entering; but the indignation with which the sense of the contrast filled Ruskin's heart was very characteristic. "I tell you broadly and boldly," he said to the cadets at Woolwich, "that, within these last ten years, we English have, as a knightly nation, lost our spurs: we have fought where we should not have fought, for gain; and we have been passive, where we should not have been passive, for fear. I tell you that the principle of non-intervention, as now preached among us, is as selfish and cruel as the worst frenzy of conquest, and differs from it only by being, not only malignant, but dastardly."<sup>1</sup>

In another series of letters (addressed to the *Reader*) Ruskin pursued his criticism of the glacial theory in geology. They show his usual skill in controversy and contain many fine passages, but were too desultory to make any decisive mark. They did not lack some attentive readers, however. It was one of them that brought the letter from Forbes, which has been given in an earlier chapter.<sup>2</sup> Ruskin's incursion into the geological field was the subject also of conversation and correspondence with Carlyle:—

(CARLYLE to RUSKIN.) "CHELSEA, 22 *February*, 1865. . . . I have a notion to come out actually some day soon; and take a serious lecture from you on what you really know, and can give some intelligible outline of, about the Rocks;—*bones* of our poor old Mother; which have always been venerable and strange to me. Next to nothing-rational could I ever learn of the subject. That of a central fire, and molten sea, on which all mountains, continents, and strata are spread floating like so many hides of leather, knocks in vain for admittance into me these forty years. . . ."

(RUSKIN to CARLYLE.)—"Pray come—as you kindly think of doing—and let us have talks, and looks. Geology is just in its most interesting stage of youth—a little presumptuous, but full of strength and advancing life. Its general principles and primary facts are now as certain as those of astronomy, but of—Central

<sup>1</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 116.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 165.

fire, we as yet know nothing. You shall look at stones, and give them *time*, and see what will come out of them for you, in your own way. . . .”

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The visit duly took place. “On Monday,” wrote Carlyle to his brother (March 1), “I had engaged myself to Denmark Hill, for Ruskin’s superb mineralogical collection and a free discourse upon the same;—an adventure that proved pleasant enough.” Ruskin himself continued his contributions to geological discussion by papers sent in this year (1865) to *The Geological Magazine* on “The Shape and Structure of some Parts of the Alps, with reference to Denudation.” These papers, which were very carefully written, deal destructively with theories of erosion—in a quizzical and questioning way, however; and with regard to theories of elevation, ask the geologists to explain why some rocks were raised bending and others rigid—questions to which he returned in *Deucalion*. Carlyle’s letter may have suggested to Ruskin to write *The Ethics of the Dust*; but that book had a setting of its own which introduces an episode in Ruskin’s life.

## V

The reader may have noted in previous chapters references to Winnington. Among the audience at Ruskin’s lecture at Manchester in 1859 was Miss Bell, then the Principal of a School for Girls at Winnington Hall, Cheshire. She was a great admirer of Ruskin’s writings, and having now paid him the compliment of travelling with some of her pupils to hear him lecture, she pressed him to come and see the school. Ruskin accepted the invitation, and sent his first impressions of the place:—

(*To his Father.*) “March 12, 1859.—This is such a nice place that I am going to stay till Monday: an enormous old-fashioned house, full of galleries and up and down stairs, but with magnificently large rooms where wanted; the drawing-room is a huge octagon—I suppose at least forty feet high—like the tower of a castle (hung half-way up all round with large and beautiful Turner



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and Raphael engravings), and with a baronial fireplace; and in the evening, brightly lighted with the groups of girls scattered round it, it is a quite beautiful scene in its way. Their morning chapel, too, is very interesting: though only a large room, it is nicely fitted with reading desk and seats like a college chapel, and two pretty and rich stained glass windows and well-toned organ. They have morning prayers, with only one of the lessons, and without the psalms, but singing the *Te Deum* or the other hymn and other choral parts; and as out of the thirty-five or forty girls perhaps twenty-five or thirty have really available voices, well trained and divided, it was infinitely more beautiful than any ordinary church service—like the Trinità de' Monti Convent service more than anything else; and must be very good for them, quite different in its effect on their minds from our wretched penance of College chapel. The house stands in a superb park full of old trees, and sloping down to the river, with a steep bank of trees on the other side; just the kind of thing Mrs. Sherwood likes to describe; and the girls look all as healthy and happy as can be, down to the little six-year-old ones, who, I find, know me by the fairy tale, as the others do by my large books—so I am quite at home. They have my portrait in the library with three others—Maurice, the Bishop of Oxford, and Archdeacon Hare—so that I can't but stay over the Sunday."

The staying over the Sunday was to be the first of many visits. "Miss Bell," says Lady Burne-Jones, "was an extremely clever woman, of a powerful and masterful turn of mind, evidently understanding that Ruskin was the greatest man she had ever seen, and that she must make the utmost use of the intimacy he accorded her and interest he took in her school." She was a brilliant talker, and an educational pioneer. The teachers and the girls alike were encouraged to pursue various interests; life was many-sided and strenuous; and outdoor exercises were given a large place. All this interested Ruskin greatly; at Winnington he saw many of his theories and ideals in practice. The school and its inmates, the old school-house and its surroundings, appealed also to his æsthetic sense. He came away delighted with everything

he had heard and seen; and he returned on each successive visit with the same enjoyment. He spent some time there in the autumn of 1859, writing *The Elements of Perspective*. On his visits to England during the years of exile he seldom failed to make occasion to fit in several days at Winnington. Miss Bell had a room specially set apart for him, and windows were opened in it so that it might look out in three directions on the river. Sometimes he took his artist-friends there. Lady Burne-Jones, in the passage already referred to, describes a visit which she and her husband paid there; Mr. Shields also was an occasional visitor. The school was sometimes in financial straits, and Ruskin's purse was open to relieve its necessities. His father threw out some words of caution about these loans or gifts, which were of pictures and drawings, as well as of money; and, in the end, the old man's warnings were to be justified by the event. But this was at a later date, and during the years with which we are now concerned, the gardens, the park, and the class-rooms of Miss Bell's school witnessed some of Ruskin's most unclouded hours.

The school was to him a picture in real life. "The long tables with the bright faces above them," he wrote to his father (Dec. 2, 1863), "are so like Paul Veronese's great picture in the Louvre; the mere picturesqueness of the thing is worth a great deal." In an earlier chapter we caught a glimpse of him joining in the dancing. The dancing was well, but in the ideal schooling of the Muses, which Ruskin learnt from Plato,<sup>1</sup> song and the dance went hand in hand. So he devised singing dances for the girls, with words—and perhaps also with tunes of his own composition. Such was a piece, written in 1863, which he called "The Peace Song":—

"Awake! awake! the stars are pale, the east is russet gray;  
They fade, behold the phantoms fade, that kept the gates of Day;  
Throw wide the burning valves, and let the golden streets be  
free,

The morning watch is past—the watch of evening shall not be. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 82.

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For aye, the time of wrath is past, and near the time of rest,  
[And honour binds the brow of man, and faithfulness his breast,—  
Behold, the time of wrath is past, and righteousness shall be,  
And the Wolf is dead in Arcady, and the Dragon in the sea !”

A letter which he wrote from Winnington to a little girl<sup>1</sup> illustrates his manner with his young friends :—

“ *13th March* [1859].—MY DEAR ALICE,—I have been travelling, and did not get your drawing of the sea till to-day. And though mamma rightly says it is not *very* well done,—yet, as it is very difficult to draw the sea well, I like it and am glad to have it ; indeed it is better done than many drawings of sea by older people. As for birds, you are better off than I have been, for at Bolton Abbey, where I have been staying four days, the birds are so many, and sing so sweetly, that one would think all the choristers of the Abbey had been turned into birds when they died—the little choristers into linnets, the middle-sized choristers with red caps into bull-finches, and the fat old monk choristers in black hoods into blackbirds ; and if they have been, I am sure they must enjoy twittering in the branches of the trees much more than they used to enjoy sitting in the damp stone niches in the dark. They have to get up terribly early still, but not at midnight. They used to be tired of singing and ready to come and breakfast with me at half-past eight, and ate up a quarter of my loaf every morning so fast that I was always afraid they would choke themselves. I am sorry to say they quarrelled over some of the large bits in an entirely unclerical manner.

“ Another place I have been at is called Settle. It is in Yorkshire, and just above it are the sources of nearly all the Yorkshire rivers, in wild moors. Now when the rivers are young, they are very noisy—sometimes quite too noisy for rivers going to be bred up to respectable businesses as most English rivers are ; and their education is conducted by a great mountain called Ingleborough in a very severe way. The rocks of Ingleborough are full of deep holes ; and whenever a young river gets quite unruly, it is sent into a hole—as little girls used to be put in corners—and after running for a quarter of an hour or so in the dark, it comes out

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Alice Donkin ; Ruskin sent a copy of the letter to his father.

again, looking much subdued and quite quiet. Sometimes when two or three get in the dark together, one doesn't know which is which, when they come out again; perhaps if one could understand what they said with their little lisping lips of waves, we might hear them say—

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'I am—here, here again,  
I'm the River Ure;  
And I'm sure  
That I won't be any more loud or vain.  
There shall never  
Be a river  
So pure, and demure,  
As the little river Ure.'

And then one would hear another say perhaps—

'I'm the river Ribble—  
Poor little Ribble  
By pebble and by nibble  
And by troubled little treble—  
Bibble, babble, babble, bibble—  
You may know the river Ribble;  
Who always will be good  
Evermore,  
And flow only as I should  
When the sweet leaves of the wood  
Kiss me—(so that I'm not rude)—  
From my shore.'

No room for any other river sayings—only for *my* saying, my dear Alice, that I'm always affectionately yours, J. RUSKIN."

To many a talk such as this, from the "old Lecturer" of *The Ethics of the Dust*, must the younger girls at Winnington have listened when the day's play and lesson were done, and the shadows were long upon the grass. At other times Ruskin took a more formal part in the teaching of the school. We hear of him conducting "a Bible class" and giving "geology lessons." He brought down his minerals, his books, and his portfolios, and would let the girls watch and question, while he sorted his specimens or washed in his drawings. In the evenings there was always music, and Miss Bell sometimes had distinguished performers among her visitors:—

(*To his Father.*) "Dec. 1864.—I like Mr. and Mrs. Hallé so very much, and am entirely glad to know so great a musician and



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evidently so good and wise a man. He was very happy yesterday evening, and actually sat down and played quadrilles for us to dance to—which is, in its way, something like Titian sketching patterns for ball-dresses. But afterwards he played ‘Home, sweet Home,’ with three variations—*quite* the most wonderful thing I have ever heard in music. Though I was close to the piano, the motion of the fingers was entirely invisible—a mere *mist* of rapidity; the *hands* moving softly and slowly, and the variation, in the ear, like a murmur of a light fountain, far away. It was beautiful too to see the girls’ faces round, the eyes all wet with feeling, and the little coral mouths fixed into little half open gaps with utter intensity of astonishment.”

Sir Charles Hallé, who had been “careful to select what was most great and beautiful and played his very best” in Ruskin’s honour, was not a little disappointed at “Home, Sweet Home,” so “sickly and shallow,” being preferred to Beethoven. Ruskin sent his explanation and excuses, with some very pretty compliments, but confessed, “I don’t understand Beethoven and I fear I never shall have time to do so.”<sup>1</sup> It was the scene, however, that had appealed to Ruskin; he described it in *The Cestus of Aglaia* (§ 27). “Only La Robbia himself,” he said, “could have rendered some image of that listening”—another instance of the artistic suggestiveness that Ruskin found around him at Winnington. The whole place seemed to realise Plato’s ideal of a spot where, in the education of the young, fair sights and sounds should meet the sense like a breeze.

Such was the “very pretty stage,” as Carlyle called it, on which Ruskin placed the dialogues entitled *The Ethics of the Dust*. The dialogue is, as Ruskin says, for the most part imaginary; but it embodies the substance of many real talks, and the characters, though not in every respect “historical,” were real persons. The lectures reflect more particularly the study of Egyptian antiquities, in which Ruskin was now interested. “The germ, or rather bulb” of the book in its principal subject, the ethics of crystallisation, is to be found, as Ruskin says, in the chapter on “Compact Crystallines” in

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé*, p. 164.

the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*. The book itself was written in the autumn of 1865, and issued in the following December. It found in Carlyle a very appreciative reader:—

“CHELSEA, 20th December 1865.—DEAR RUSKIN, . . . The *Ethics of the Dust*, which I devoured without pause, and intend to look at again, is a most shining Performance! Not for a long while have I read anything tenth-part so radiant with talent, ingenuity, lambent fire (sheet and *other* lightnings) of all commendable kinds! Never was such a Lecture on Crystallography before had there been nothing else in it, and there are all manner of things. In power of *expression*, I pronounce it to be supreme; never did anybody who had *such* things to explain, explain them better. And the bits of Egyptian Mythology, the cunning *Dreams* about Pthah, Neith, etc., apart from their *elucidative* quality, which is exquisite, have in them a poetry that might fill any Tennyson with despair. You are very dramatic, too; nothing wanting in the stage-directions, in the pretty little indications—a very pretty stage and *dramatis personæ* altogether. Such is my first feeling about your book, dear R. Come soon, and I will tell you all the *faults* of it, if I gradually discover a great many. In fact, *come* at any rate!”

The public, however, did not devour the book without pause; no second edition was called for; and the publishers, as Ruskin says, begged him to “write no more in dialogue.” When, however, some years later, Ruskin took the publishing of his books into his own hands, he reprinted *The Ethics of the Dust*, without alteration but with a new Preface (1877), and since then the book has enjoyed a constant and steady sale.

## VI

On art Ruskin wrote little during this period, but what he did write is so characteristic of his thought at the time as to require some notice. In May 1865 he read a paper on *The Study of Architecture in Schools* to the Royal Institute of British Architects. Into this paper was compressed much that was most deeply felt in his theory of the place of the fine arts in human life, and the discussion which followed the reading of his paper shows the strong

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impression which it made at the time. "The French word *ébloui*," said one of the speakers, "was the only term which could adequately define the mixed state of surprise, delight, and general acute excitement in which the fiery essay had left him. Within the compass of a brief discourse the accomplished lecturer had handled nearly the whole scope of human philosophy, as well as of the art which it was their privilege to practise, tracing, as far as practicable, the infinite ramifications which he supposed to connect the material elements of the successful practice of architecture with our moral natures."<sup>1</sup> The speaker rightly characterised the paper in noting its fiery energy and width of range; it was characteristic also in its confession of the speaker's divided counsels—continuing his pursuit of the beautiful, and yet half "seceding from the study of all art."

During the earlier months of the same year Ruskin contributed to the *Art Journal* a series of papers which he entitled *The Cestus of Aglaia*. A sub-title—"Nine Papers on the Laws of Art"—would indicate their general drift. The author's object was, as he says, to define "some of the simplest laws which are binding on Art practice and judgment"—laws, "for present practice of Art in our schools, which may be admitted, if not with absolute, at least with a sufficient consent, by leading artists." He discusses in turn the relation of pure outline to suggestion of shade; the functions of Modesty, Patience, and speed in art; the besetting dangers of the practice of etching; the vice of Liberty, and contrary virtue, Continnence, in art; the limits of material; the relation between public and private art; and the powers and scope of various kinds of engraving. He had intended, in a further paper, to continue the subject by discussing the technical laws of that branch of art; but the series was not continued, and the subject was afterwards treated elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> In choosing his title, he had, he says, a double thought. It was "partly in memory of these outcast fancies of the great masters"—those fancies, that is, in which men of old time had connected their own

<sup>1</sup> The speaker was Mr. Digby Wyatt: *Sessional Papers of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 1864-65, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> In his Oxford course of lectures, entitled *Ariadne Florentina*.

powers and activities with spiritual forces; and thus Ruskin's first thought was to express in his title his abiding, and ever strengthening, conviction of the spiritual power of art. But, secondly, he intended by the title to indicate that the virtues which the Greeks personified, or included, in their conception of Grace were themselves the virtues of fine art. The arts only reach their highest power when the Girdle of Grace confines their activities and directs their choice. *The Cestus of Aglaia* contains passages which are among the most eloquent and felicitous in Ruskin's writings. The description of the house-fly as a type of liberty is a case in point; the praise of the railway-engine is another. He describes the "assemblage of accurate and mighty faculties" in it, and then breaks off thus:—

"But as I reach this point of reverence, the unreasonable thing is sure to give a shriek as of a thousand unanimous vultures, which leaves me shuddering in real physical pain for some half minute following; and assures me, during slow recovery, that a people which can endure such fluting and piping among them is not likely soon to have its modest ear pleased by aught of oaten stop or pastoral song."

How characteristic is the transition! And these papers themselves were written desultorily, and in the esoteric style which I have already illustrated in a passage quoted from them.<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's idea in them had been to draw up Laws of Art in co-operation with other teachers and artists; but no answer came to his invitation. This is not altogether to be wondered at. Artists or students, into whose hands the *Art Journal* may have fallen, may have been put off from taking up the author's more practical points by some puzzlement over Homer's Aglaia, Chaucer's hill of sand, and the Grison Grey. In writing *The Cestus of Aglaia*, Ruskin set down whatever came into his head. And a great deal came into his head. "I am almost sick and giddy (though perfectly well)," he said himself, "with the quantity of things in my head—trains of thought beginning and branching to infinity, crossing each other, and all tempting and wanting to be worked out."

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 357.



## CHAPTER VII

### TIME AND TIDE

(1866, 1867)

"I feel constantly as if I were living in one great churchyard, with people all round me clinging feebly to the edges of open graves, and calling for help, as they fall back into them, out of sight."—*Time and Tide* (1867).

UNDER the accumulation of work described in the last chapter, Ruskin felt the need of change and rest. He broke off abruptly the papers in the *Art Journal*, and leaving W. H. Harrison to see *The Crown of Wild Olive* through the press, he started, on April 24, 1866, for a holiday in Switzerland.

#### I

On this tour, he took with him his cousin Joan and another young girl, Miss Constance Hilliard, a niece of Lady Trevelyan, who also, with her husband, Sir Walter, was of the party. Lady Trevelyan was keenly interested in wild flowers; Sir Walter also was a botanist, and he and Ruskin looked forward to many a ramble together. The journey was undertaken partly for the sake of Lady Trevelyan's health, and Ruskin's letters to his mother record alternate hopes and fears:—

"PARIS, 2nd May 1866.—Lady Trevelyan is much better to-day, but it is not safe to move her yet—till to-morrow. So I'm going to take the children to look at Chartres Cathedral—we can get three hours there, and be back to seven o'clock dinner. We drove round by St. Cloud and Sèvres yesterday; the blossomed trees being glorious by the Seine,—the children in high spirits. It reminds me always too much of Turner—every bend of these rivers is haunted by him."

“NEUCHÂTEL, 10th May.—Lady T. is still too weak to move. We had (the children and I) a delightful day yesterday at the Pierre à Bot, gathering vetches and lilies of the valley in the woods, and picnic afterwards on the lovely mossy grass, in view of all the Alps, Jungfrau, Eiger, Blumlis Alp, Altels, and the rest with intermediate lake and farmsteads and apple-blossom. Very heavenly, the people only showing, every year, steadier march to decline, and the youth of the towns, cigar in mouth and haggard-faced, and sullen-mouthed and evil-eyed, frightful to think of and anticipate the future of.”

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At Neuchâtel, three days later, Lady Trevelyan passed away, and her death was a heavy loss to Ruskin. She had been one of the “tutelary powers” of his women-friendships; he had relied not a little on her warm sympathy and wise advice. “That loving, bright, faithful friend,” wrote Dr. John Brown to Ruskin, “such as you and I are not likely to see till we see herself, if that is ever to be.”<sup>1</sup> Ruskin threw himself into the duty of doing all that was possible to console his friend. He persuaded Sir Walter, after the necessary arrangements had been concluded at Neuchâtel, to accompany him and the girls for a week at Thun and Interlaken. He was resolved, moreover, not to allow his grief to spoil the children’s holiday. From Thun he was able to write:—

(To C. A. HOWELL.) “21st May.—‘Poste Restante, Interlachen, Suisse,’ will find me, I hope, for some days to come. I’ve had a rather bad time of it at Neuchâtel; what with Death and the North Wind; both devil’s inventions as far as I can make out. But things are looking a little better now, and I had a lovely three hours’ walk by the lake shore, in cloudless calm, from five to eight this morning, under hawthorn and chestnut—here just in full blossom—and among other pleasantnesses—too good for mortals, as the North Wind and the rest of it are too bad. We don’t deserve either such blessing or cursing, it seems to poor moth me.”

Ruskin had resources of distraction and of consolation in the common incidents, no less than in the majestic spectacles, of nature. He notes in his diary (May 31) some mischance

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Dr. John Brown*, pp. 242, 206.

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in missing a carriage at Interlaken; but, he adds, "sat and looked at tame swallows building nests, getting mud out of the road close at our feet." Interlaken itself (May 22) was even then "all dust, misery, and casino"; but, then as ever, "the hills more and more divine." Then, again, Ruskin found much interest in giving all the pleasure he could to his young companions, and in noting the workings of their minds. If they were like other young girls, one may hazard the conjecture that they did not find the shops and promenades "all misery." "In my time," wrote Ruskin to his mother, "I must have been very different from other children"; but "a canary bird," he reflects, "can, as Carlyle says, hold only its own quantity of astonishment." At other times his own pleasure is deepened by the responsiveness of his young friends to the impressions of the scenery around him. At the hotel of the Giessbach, on the lake of Brienz, they spent a happy week, and Ruskin even pardoned the illumination of the falls:—

(*To his Mother.*) "HÔTEL DE GIESSBACH, 7th June.—I cannot tell you how much I am struck with the beauty of this fall: it is different from everything I have ever seen in torrents. . . . I do not often endure with patience any cockneyisms or showing off at these lovely places. But they do one thing here so interesting that I can forgive it. One of the chief cascades (about midway up the hill) falls over a projecting rock, so that one can walk under the torrent as it comes over. It leaps so clear that one is hardly splashed except at one place. Well, when it gets dark, they burn, for five minutes, one of the strongest steady fireworks of a crimson colour, behind the fall. The red light shines right through, turning the whole waterfall into a torrent of fire."

(*To his Mother.*) "INTERLAKEN, 14th June, Morning.—We are down here again to breakfast—from Lauterbrunnen. . . . Of the two daughters of the Giessbach hotel, one is a six months' widow, just eighteen; the other, not quite seventeen, unmarried, and both really little ladies, very quiet and modest, and waiting on us themselves, though they would sit down and talk afterwards if we asked them, speaking English perfectly. I gave the widow *In Memoriam*, sending it to her from here, and I enclose her letter of thanks."

“Marie of the Giessbach” and her sister are often referred to in Ruskin’s letters in terms of affectionate remembrance; and in old age his memory recalled with fondness the impressions of this visit: one of the unwritten chapters of *Præterita* was to have been entitled “The Rainbows of Giessbach.”

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At Lucerne he did much sketching; “found my great view of Lucerne safe,” he notes in his diary—that view of the walls and towers which he drew so often. He returned by some more of his favourite sketching-haunts, such as Schaffhausen and Baden, and reached home in the middle of July. While he was in Switzerland, a requisition had reached him from Oxford, signed by Acland, Tyrwhitt, and others, asking him to allow his name to be brought forward for the Professorship of Poetry, in succession to Matthew Arnold. At first he had left the matter in the hands of his friends, but afterwards he requested them to withdraw his candidature, and Sir Francis Doyle was appointed. On reaching home he was soon immersed in work of a very different character.

## II

In October 1865 disturbances had broken out in Jamaica, and many people believed that a negro insurrection was at hand. The Governor of the island, Mr. Edward John Eyre, taking a very serious view of the situation, proclaimed martial law; George William Gordon, the chief advocate of the rights of the negroes, was hanged, and the insurrection was suppressed with ruthless severity. The news of these events caused great excitement in England, and men ranged themselves at once into parties. The one side, led by John Stuart Mill, formed the Jamaica Committee for the purpose of seeing that Governor Eyre was called to account; among those who joined the Committee were Herbert Spencer, Huxley, and Goldwin Smith. Carlyle took a leading part on the other side; an Eyre Defence and Aid Fund was formed to sustain the Governor; and Carlyle joined it, among others who had the same sympathies



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being Tennyson, Kingsley, and Dickens. Ruskin at once ranged himself on the side of Carlyle, and in December 1865 had sent a letter to the press in defence of Governor Eyre. He now gave £100 to the Defence Fund, and made a speech at a meeting of the Defence Committee. He also threw himself into the personal work which agitation of this kind involves—enlisting recruits, persuading waverers, combating objections. “A day of various effort yesterday,” he notes in his diary (Sept. 3, 1886); “rewarded this morning by some messages and letters, all kind and helpful.” And, again (September 5), “Doing my duty as well as I can for Governor Eyre.” Carlyle’s verdict was that Ruskin had done his duty right well. He sent a copy of Ruskin’s speech to a friend, with this note (September 15):—

“The Eyre Committee is going on better. Indeed it is now getting fairly on its feet. Ruskin’s speech—now don’t frown upon it, but read it again till you understand it—is a right gallant thrust, I can assure you. While all the world stands tremulous, shilly-shallying from the gutter, impetuous Ruskin plunges his rapier up to the very hilt in the abominable belly of the vast blockheadism, and leaves it staring very considerably.”<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin’s sympathies went out whole-heartedly in this matter to the man who, in a moment of acute danger, as he maintained, had stood firm for the cause of order. His friendship for Carlyle, and his desire to share the burden of work with one who was now under the cloud of domestic sorrow, gave an additional spur to his activity. Ever since Ruskin had entered the field against “the dismal science,” his relations with Carlyle had grown more and more intimate and affectionate. As each new shaft was hurled by Ruskin, Carlyle applauded and exhorted the younger man to fresh onslaughts. Ruskin was a frequent caller at Chelsea, and Carlyle was sometimes persuaded to ride out to Denmark Hill. He liked Ruskin’s mother, and found many a link of Scottish association with the past in talks with Miss Joan. “He used to take pleasure,”

<sup>1</sup> Froude’s *Carlyle’s Life in London*, vol. ii. p. 330.

says Ruskin, "in the quiet of the Denmark Hill garden, and to use all his influence with me to make me contented in my duty to my mother."<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's loss in the death of his wife had drawn the two men yet closer together:—

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(CARLYLE to RUSKIN.) "CHELSEA, 10th May 1866.—Your kind words from Dijon were welcome to me: thanks. I did not doubt your sympathy in what has come; but it is better that I see it laid before me. You are yourself very unhappy, as I too well discern—heavy-laden, obstructed and dispirited; but you have a great work still ahead, and will gradually have to gird yourself up against the *heat of the day*, which is coming on for you,—as the Night too is coming. Think valiantly of these things. I cannot write to you; I do not wish yet even to speak to anybody; find it more tolerable to gaze steadily in silence on the blackness of the abysses that have suddenly opened round me, and as it were swallowed up my poor little world. Day by day the stroke that has fallen, like a thunderbolt out of skies all *blue* (as I often think), becomes more immeasurable to me; my life all laid in ruins, and the one light of it as if gone out.<sup>2</sup> And yet there is an inexpressible beauty, and even an epic greatness (known only to God and me), in the Life of my victorious little Darling whom I shall see no more. Silence about all that; every word I speak or write of it seems to desecrate it,—so unworthy of the Fact now wrapt in the Eternities, as God has willed. . . . Come and see me when you get home; come *oftener* and see me, and speak *more* frankly to me (for I am very true to your highest interests and you) while I still remain here. . . ."

Ruskin obeyed the injunction, and immediately on his return went to see Carlyle. The diary records many visits during the latter part of 1866. Their friendship was able, as we shall hear presently, to withstand the strain of a vexatious dispute. For the rest, Ruskin was at this time

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 65.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle used these words in the epitaph which he composed for the tombstone of his wife's father in the chancel of Haddington Church: "Here likewise now rests

Jane Welsh Carlyle, Spouse of Thomas Carlyle, Chelsea, London. . . . She died at London 21st April, 1866, suddenly snatched away from him, and the light of his life as if gone out."

CHAP. working quietly at botany and mineralogy. In October  
VII. he gave a lecture at Harrow, and presented the School with a collection of minerals. In the following October he gave a second lecture there.

### III

"In 1867," says Ruskin, "the first warning mischief to my health showed itself, giddiness and mistiness of head and eyes, which stopped alike my drawing and thinking to any good purpose."<sup>1</sup> In the early part of the year, however, his drawing had prospered, and several of the exquisite studies of birds and shells which now form part of the Ruskin Art Collection at Oxford were done at this time. Entries in his diary show how much pains he took with them:—

"1867. *Jan.* 17.—Painting pheasant—large: a singularly good and bright day. *Jan.* 18.—Finished pheasant satisfactorily, though day foggy.

"*Jan.* 20.—Got on with partridge. *Jan.* 21.—Finished partridge; three birds in a week.

"*Jan.* 23.—Got a bit of snipe nicely done. *Jan.* 24.—Finished snipe all but wing. *Jan.* 25.—Bettered my snipe's wing.

"*Jan.* 26.—Angry in morning and unhappy all day, but painted teal's head wonderfully. *Jan.* 28.—Worked hard at teal in morning. *Jan.* 29.—Finished teal, successfully."

A study of a wild duck, probably the finest of his drawings of birds, is now included in the collections of the British Museum. But Ruskin could find no abiding peace in such quiet studies. He turned from drawing the feathers of birds to dreams of an ideal commonwealth.

It was in the form of letters to a working man that Ruskin cast his essay towards Utopia. Thomas Dixon, of Sunderland (1831–80), a corkcutter by trade, had, writes a friend, "the ingenuous simplicity of a child and the tender sympathetic heart of a woman. He was an unostentatious, practical philanthropist, and his secret pecuniary benefactions

<sup>1</sup> Paper on "Arthur Burgess" in *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, 1887.

were not only large in proportion to his means, but, what was of far more permanent good service to humanity, he never lost an opportunity of inducing the young persons who frequented his shop or visited his house to become keen art students, judicious book-buyers, and discriminative, earnest readers. Young men and women, by dozens, owe to him the first impulse they got to cultivate something higher than either mere amusement or sordid money-making.”<sup>1</sup> A working man of this kind was a man after Ruskin’s heart. He gave to Dixon his warm friendship, and Dixon to him a whole-hearted admiration. Dixon had asked for copies of Ruskin’s writings on Political Economy. The inquiry, coming from a man representative of the highest type of the working classes, suggested to Ruskin to carry a little further the work which had been suspended in 1863. Carlyle, moreover, was constantly urging him to “be diligent” in hurling his arrows into “the black void of anarchy” around them. The American Civil War had also stirred Ruskin profoundly; and if he did not take so pronouncedly the side of the South as was the case with many notable Englishmen of the time (Mr. Gladstone, for instance), yet the methods of the North were abhorrent to him. Many violent diatribes on this subject occur in his letters to Thomas Dixon. But the condition of the time which most directly influenced these letters was the agitation, then at its height, for Parliamentary Reform. To the working men, as to the professional politicians, engaged in the exciting controversy of the day, Parliamentary Reform seemed to open a direct path to the Promised Land. Ruskin did not oppose Reform in itself, but he saw that it was no panacea. Social justice was more important than electoral redistribution; the reform of the suffrage might be well, but reform was needed also in the laws bearing upon honesty of work and honesty of exchange; political reform generally might be valuable, but the building up of the individual character was the thing yet more needful. To change a bad law was

<sup>1</sup> “Sunderland Notables. By *Sunderland Weekly Times and Echo*, William Brockie. No. 16. Thomas Dixon, Cork-Cutter,” in the *Sun-* April 6, 1888.



CHAP. desirable, but first let the working men see that they could  
VII. obey a good one.

Such were the ideas with which Ruskin began his letters to Thomas Dixon, the corkcutter of Sunderland. They are shown in the full title which he gave to the letters when he presently collected them into a volume—*Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne: Twenty-five Letters to a Working Man of Sunderland on the Laws of Work*. It was the unalterable laws of national and individual well-being that Ruskin sought to enforce—laws which, whether men recognised them or not, will assuredly make themselves felt “in due course of tide and time.”<sup>1</sup> Ruskin began the letters with the object of supplementing *Munera Pulveris*, and he chose the vehicle of familiar correspondence as requiring less concentration than a formal treatise, and as enabling him to write as the spirit moved him. The letters were very desultory and were written without any extreme care. His diary indicates various morbid conditions; he records many weird dreams, and notes that he sees “floating sparks in his eyes”; but it was in the life of the affections that he was most suffering. Alternations of disappointment and hope, chagrin, anxiety, and the weariness of waiting—these were the causes of the despondency, sleeplessness, and nervous prostration from which he often suffered, and which caused him to write to a young artist friend, to whom at this time he opened his heart, that he was “dying slowly.” Ruskin, more even than most men of wayward genius, coloured his writings with his moods, and the letters to Dixon have in them many a note of irritability and gloom.

#### IV

A passage in one of the later letters of *Time and Tide*, as it originally appeared in the newspapers, led to an unpleasant misunderstanding with Carlyle. Ruskin had reported a conversation in which, according to his account, Carlyle had said that “in the streets of Chelsea, and of the whole district of London round it, from the Park to the

<sup>1</sup> *Munera Pulveris*, § 96.

outer country (some twelve or fifteen miles of disorganised, foul, sinful, and most wretched life), he now cannot walk without being insulted, chiefly because he is a grey, old man; and also because he is cleanly dressed—these two conditions of him being wholly hostile, as the mob of the street feel, to their own instincts, and, so far as they appear to claim some kind of reverence and recognition of betterness, to be instantly crushed and jeered out of their way.” This passage went the round of the newspapers, and Carlyle publicly repudiated Ruskin’s report: “it is an untrue paragraph, disagrees with the fact throughout, and in essentials is curiously the reverse of the fact; a paragraph altogether erroneous, misfounded, superfluous, and even absurd.” This letter appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of May 29. Ruskin took no notice of it in public, but there was angry correspondence between him and his “Master.” Ruskin did not keep Carlyle’s letters, some of which he describes in his diary as “ugly.” One of his own letters to Carlyle was this:—

(1st June 1867.)—“I am under the sorrowful necessity of ignoring your present letter. You have given the lie direct in the most insulting terms possible to you to the man who probably of all men living most honoured you. It is just because he so honours you that he is compelled to require of you to do the right in this matter (but for many reasons besides, and, as I said, none of them trivial), and the right manifestly is that you justify the terms of that letter, or retract them; and that with all convenient speed.”

Two days later, the *Times* made the matter the subject of a leading article, and Carlyle then wrote to the editor saying:—

“1st. That I by no means join in heavily blaming Mr. Ruskin, and, indeed, do not blame him at all, but the contrary, except for the almost inconceivable practical blunder of printing my name, and then of carelessly hurling topsy-turvy into wild incredibility all he had to report of me—of me, and indirectly of the whole vast multitude of harmless neighbours, whom I live with here, in London and its suburbs—more than 2,000,000 of us, I should think

CHAP. —who all behave by second nature in an obliging, peaceable, and  
 VII. perfectly human manner to each other, and are all struck with amazement at Mr. Ruskin's hasty paragraph upon us.

"2nd. That in regard to the populace or *canaille* of London, to the class distinguishable by behaviour as our non-human, or half-human neighbours, which class is considerably more extensive and miscellaneous, and much more dismal and disgusting than you seem to think, I substantially agree with all that Mr. Ruskin has said of it."

This olive-branch did not appease Ruskin, and further letters of an acrimonious kind passed between the friends. It must be presumed that Ruskin had not in the first instance asked Carlyle's permission to publish the private conversation, and he therefore had no right to attach Carlyle's name to it. He was, however, obviously convinced that his recollection of it was accurate, and he considered that Carlyle should not have given "the lie direct" to it. The explanation is no doubt that Ruskin had taken too much *au grand sérieux* a characteristic piece of humorous exaggeration by Carlyle. But the quarrel was short-lived. A fortnight later Ruskin spent an evening with Carlyle; the wound was healed by personal explanations, and affectionate intercourse was resumed on the old terms.

## V

The letters collected in *Time and Tide* were written between March and May 1867; and at the same time Ruskin was busy with schemes of practical benevolence. "Plan cottage life," he notes in his diary (March 14), "and help to poor, if spared; Joanna very happy about it." Other entries record visits from Miss Octavia Hill, doubtless on the business of his housing schemes, which were among the most notable of Ruskin's contributions to practical reform. A friend of Miss Hill has described the origin of this memorable movement:—

"The 'grain of mustard seed,' from which the sturdy plant of housing reform sprang, was first planted in Ruskin's house at

Denmark Hill. One day he and Miss Octavia Hill were having a friendly chat, and he lamented the dreariness of life without an object other than the usual daily round. 'I paint, take my mother for a drive, dine with friends or answer these correspondents,' said Mr. Ruskin, drawing a heap of letters from his pocket with a rueful face, 'but one longs to do something more satisfying.' 'Most of us feel like that at times,' said his visitor. 'Well, what would you like to be doing?' asked Ruskin. 'Something to provide better homes for the poor,' was Miss Octavia Hill's quick reply. The idea seemed to strike Ruskin, and, turning sharp round in his seat, he asked: 'How could it be done? Have you a business plan?'<sup>1</sup>

Miss Hill had a plan, and Ruskin provided her with the opportunity of putting it into practice. He described the experiment in one of the letters of *Time and Tide*:—

"The most wretched houses of the poor in London often pay ten or fifteen per cent. to the landlord; and I have known an instance of sanitary legislation being hindered, to the loss of many hundreds of lives, in order that the rents of a nobleman, derived from the necessities of the poor, might not be diminished. . . . I felt this evil so strongly that I bought, in the worst part of London, one freehold and one leasehold property, consisting of houses inhabited by the lowest poor; in order to try what change in their comfort and habits I could effect by taking only a just rent, but that firmly. The houses of the leasehold pay me five per cent.; the families that used to have one room in them have now two; and are more orderly and hopeful besides; and there is a surplus still on the rents they pay after I have taken my five per cent., with which, if all goes well, they will eventually be able to buy twelve years of the lease from me. The freehold pays three per cent., with similar results in the comfort of the tenant."

The experiment prospered, and public attention was called to it. Miss Hill's methods, says her friend, "stimulated legislation, and turned the attention of philanthropists and capitalists in the direction of providing civilised dwellings for the poor. Miss Hill's recommendations and methods have spread to most of the cities and crowded

<sup>1</sup> Sarah A. Tooley in the *Daily Chronicle*, July 24, 1905.



CHAP. towns of Great Britain, and have been adopted in America  
VII. and in many European countries."

Ruskin saw much during 1867 of Carlyle, Froude, and Helps; the gentle wisdom of the author of *Friends in Council* was perhaps more helpful to his mood than the stimulus, through thunder and lightning, of Carlyle. Ruskin, it seems, was consulted about the *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, which Helps edited for Queen Victoria:—

(To MISS JOAN AGNEW.) "DENMARK HILL [Jan. 10, '68].—Do you recollect Miss Helps and I having such hard work over 'that book' in the study? It was the Queen's, which I see is just out. A fine bother I had of it, for Mr. Helps wanted to put all the 'Queen's English' to rights—and I insisted on keeping it as it was written—only cutting out what wouldn't do at all. There were some little bits wonderfully funny in their simplicity, but I got most of them kept in. But I didn't want the book to be published at all, for though all the mamas and nurses will like it, there are some failing points in it which are serious—if people find them out. However, I did my duty in the advice I gave—and now I'm very glad it wasn't taken. I always *hoped* it *wouldn't* be, for several reasons which I mean to keep to myself."

How strongly Helps sympathised with Ruskin's social aims, how greatly he admired the devotion which inspired them, is shown in the dedicatory letter prefixed to *Conversations on War and General Culture* (1871):—

"MY DEAR RUSKIN,—I dedicate these *Conversations* to you, feeling that there is none who will receive them with more kindness, and endeavour with more earnestness to make the best of them. I sympathise with you very cordially in the great effort you are making to draw attention to the wants of the labouring classes. Whatever may be the measure of your success in that difficult work, you, at any rate, have set a great example in showing that a man, who has an especial aptitude for teaching the most advanced students in matters of high art, can, for the moment, put aside his especial vocation, in order to make mankind address themselves to the far greater question of how the poorer classes

can be raised to independence of thought, comfort of living, and dignity of behaviour.—I remain, yours affectionately, CHAP.  
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“THE AUTHOR.”

This dedication is dated “March 1871,” and has special reference to the scheme of “St. George’s Guild” then being expounded in *Fors Clavigera*. The germ of the idea was already in Ruskin’s mind, as appears from a letter to a Yorkshire correspondent and friend:—

“DENMARK HILL, S., 15th May, ’67.—I am very glad of your letter, in all ways. Do you know, I think the end of it will be that any of us who have yet hearts sound enough must verily and in deed draw together and initiate a true and wholesome way of life, in defiance of the world, and with laws which we will vow to obey, and endeavour to make others, by our example, accept. I think it must come to this, but accidents of my own life have prevented me until lately from being able to give to such a plan any practical hope; but now I might, with some help, be led on to its organization. Would you join it, and vow to keep justice and judgment and the peace of God on this earth?”

## VI

For inner consolation, meanwhile, in hours of suffering and anxiety Ruskin turned, as his diary shows, to the Bible. He tried, daily for some months, to cast his horoscope, and to be guided and strengthened, by *Sortes Biblicæ*. Thus on May 15 we read, “Open at ‘Behold, we have left all and followed thee’”; on May 19, “Open in evening at ‘Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life’”; and on August 14, “‘Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, wherefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness’”; and again, on the same day, “Opened at Isaiah xxxiii. 17: ‘Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.’ My old Bible often *does* open there, but it was a happy first reading.” In May he had two public engagements to fulfil. The first was the delivery of the Rede Lecture at Cambridge on May

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24. In style, this lecture shows the note of academical state, of courtly elaboration, which was often heard in Ruskin's professorial discourses at Oxford. The subject, as already mentioned (p. 88), was *The Relation of National Ethics to National Arts*. Ruskin illustrated it from literature, from music, from the formative arts, and concluded with this earnest appeal to his young hearers:—

“Either you are entering into a life which, however confused and shadowy now, must increase as day follows day into the light of an immortal and irrevocable fate, towards which every tread of your foot is an approach, and for which every act of your hands is a preparation; or else you are born but for a moment into this miracle of an universe, and allowed for a moment the breathing of its air and the sense of its splendour. . . . One of these alternatives must, I repeat, be true, and if you are men you cannot encounter either of them with a smile, nor steel yourselves by mockery against the hour which must bring you either face to face with Death, or face to face with God. But this you know, that whether you have to prepare for inexorable judgment or for endless darkness, and for one you must, the deeds and methods of life which you will be able joyfully to look back upon must be the same, and that of these glittering days of yours, numbered or numberless, no ray should fade that has not seen some strain to scatter the evil and confirm the good and grace in your souls; that so the light of them may at last endure either in the sight of angels, or memory-assisted strength of men.”

On the same visit to Cambridge, Ruskin received from the University the honorary degree of LL.D. :—

(*To his Mother.*) “May 23.—All went well to-day—and pleasingly, if anybody had been there to please. But it is a great deal, yet, to have one's honour thought of, by Mother—and Mistress—and by a loving little cousin like Joan. Else, what good would there be in it?”

Ruskin's next lecture was at the Royal Institution on June 7, *On the Present State of Modern Art with reference to the Advisable Arrangement of the National Gallery*.

The practical suggestions made in this lecture foreshadowed in a remarkable way some things afterwards accomplished. In reading his suggestions for People's Palaces, we may remember that Sir Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*—the story from which the People's Palace in the Mile End Road was to spring—did not appear till fifteen years later (1882). His plea for Municipal Art Galleries was delivered at a time when few such institutions as yet existed. Whether Ruskin would altogether have approved of the Tate Gallery may be doubted, but it is worth noting that he advocated the building of a new National Gallery on the Millbank site. His views on the proper co-ordination of museums and galleries—his distinction between popular and educational collections and treasure-houses of what is rich and rare—are well worth attention to-day. He returned to the subject thirteen years later in a series of letters in the *Art Journal* on "A Museum or Picture Gallery: its Functions and its Formation," and in the St. George's Museum at Sheffield he was able, on a small scale, to give an object-lesson in what he meant.

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## VII

Both lectures were successful, but such exercises were hardly to be commended as tonics for overwrought nerves; so he determined, after a visit to Osborne Gordon at East-hampstead, to seek rest and refreshment, if such might be, in the English lakeland which had given him so many happy days in his boyhood, and which was to be the home of his later years. At first the contrast between old times and new—between the recollections of the unclouded hours of childhood and the burden and the mystery of later knowledge and suffering, and the sight, moreover, of new hotels and fouled streams—saddened him. "I have the secret," he wrote to his mother (July 16), "of extracting sadness from all things, instead of joy, which is no enviable talisman. Forgive me if I ever write in a way that may pain you. It is best that you should know, when I write cheerfully, it is no pretended cheerfulness; so when I am sad, I think it



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right to confess it." After a few days on Windermere, Ruskin went to pay a visit to Lady Henry Kerr at Huntley Burn, on the Scottish Border, close to Abbotsford. He enjoyed the company of his friends, and recollections of it came back to him in after years. "Will you forgive my connecting the personal memory," he said in one of his last Oxford lectures, "of having once had a wild rose gathered for me, in the glen of Thomas the Rhymer, by the daughter of one of the few remaining Catholic houses of Scotland, with the pleasure I have in reading to you this following true account of the origin of the name of St. Cuthbert's birthplace;—the rather because I owe it to friendship of the same date, with Mr. Cockburn Muir, of Melrose?"<sup>1</sup> But Ruskin soon found the routine of a visit tiresome, and returned to solitude. The hills and moors brought him increase of strength:—

"KESWICK, 2nd July, 1867.—I had a really fine walk yesterday, discovering two pieces of mountain scenery hitherto unknown to me, and very truly noble—buttress of rock on the flanks of Grasmere, between this lake and Crummock Water, which may compare not disadvantageously with many pieces of Swiss scenery. I was delighted to find them, as it is always good to have a motive for one's walks, and I shall want to see these on all sides. The weather was delightful—though sudden and mysterious blasts of wind came up through the gorges, the *tops* of the hills were all in perfect repose. I had rather a severe walk of five hours, without stopping more than twenty minutes in all (I never drew bridle once, from here to Grasmere top—five miles, and 2800 feet up), and came in very fresh and frightfully hungry, so I must certainly be gaining strength.

"Your letter to-day is very prettily written, so you are certainly not *losing* it. . . . I take some pains with my writing, but am always shocked to look at it afterwards. I had a botanist breakfasting with me to-day who wrote a most beautiful hand, but he was one lump of pleasant active egotism—utterly *insensitive*, and I fancy my broken hand comes partly of sensitiveness, which I should be sorry to lose."

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<sup>1</sup> *Pleasures of England*, § 66.

There are frequent apologies in the letters to his mother, now and earlier, for bad handwriting. She was somewhat of a precisian in all things, and doubtless told John to mind his *ps* and *qs*; at the present time, too, her sight was failing. She could never quite realise, moreover, that her boy was grown up, and she wrote to him on this occasion, "hoping that he always had some one with him on his mountain rambles." He had both his servant Crawley and his gardener Downs with him, and his mother's hope was often realised, for on many of the walks described in later letters, Ruskin was attended by Downs "hunting up ferns" and Crawley "carrying my rock specimens." It was characteristic of Ruskin that many of his movements were arranged in order to show Downs this, and enable Downs to do that. It was characteristic also that, before starting on his own holiday, he had sent his assistants, Mr. George Allen and Mr. William Ward, on a sketching and walking tour in the Meuse country. Letters to his mother describe many of his own rambles, in which he was constantly discovering new beauties in cloud and fell. It must have been after one of these mountain rambles that Frederic Myers, then a young man of twenty-four, first saw Ruskin. "I met him first," says Myers, "in my own earliest home, beneath the spurs of Skiddaw—its long slopes 'bronzed with deepest radiance,' as the boy Wordsworth had seen them long since in even such an evening's glow. Since early morning Ruskin had lain and wandered in the folds and hollows of the hill; and he came back, grave as from a solemn service, from 'day-long gazing on the heather and the blue.'"<sup>1</sup> Myers was often to meet Ruskin in later years at Broadlands, and his psychical researches had much of Ruskin's sympathy. In a letter to his cousin, Ruskin himself describes such a day of solemn service and gazing:—

"KESWICK, 15th August. *Evening*.—I thought I should like a long, quiet day on Skiddaw by myself, so I gave Crawley some work at home, in packing stones, and took my hammer and compass,

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<sup>1</sup> *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 90. Myers' father was incumbent of St. John's, Keswick.

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and sauntered up leisurely. It was threatening rain, in its very beauty of stillness,—no sunshine—only dead calm under grey sky. I sate down for a while on the highest shoulder of the hill under the summit—in perfect calm of air—as if in a room! Then, suddenly—in a space of not more than ten minutes—vast volumes of white cloud formed in the west. When I first sate down, all the Cumberland mountains, from Scawfell to the Penrith hills, lay round me like a clear model, cut in wood—I never saw anything so *ridiculously* clear—great masses 2000 feet high looking like little green bosses under one's hand. Then as I said, in ten minutes, the white clouds formed, and came foaming from the west towards Skiddaw; then answering white fleeces started into being on Scawfell and Helvellyn—and the moment they were formed, the unnatural clearness passed away, and the mountains, where still visible, resumed their proper distances. I rose and went on along the stately ridge towards the summit, hammering and poking about for fibrous quartz. . . . It was very beautiful, with the white cloud filling all the western valley—and the air still calm—and the desolate peak and moors, motionless for many a league, but for the spots of white—which were sheep, one knew—and were sometimes to be seen to move. I always—even in my naughtiest times—had a way of praying on hill summits, when I could get quiet on them; so I knelt on a bit of rock to pray—and there came suddenly into my mind the clause of the Litany, 'for all that travel by land or water,' etc. So I prayed it, and you can't think what a strange, intense meaning it had up there—one felt so much more the feebleness of the feeble there, where all was wild and strong, and there 'Show thy pity on all prisoners and captives' came so wonderfully where I had the feeling of absolutely boundless liberty. I could rise from kneeling and dash away to any quarter of heaven—east or west or south or north—with leagues of moorland tossed one after another like sea waves. . . ."

On returning home Ruskin went for some time to Norwood, with his mother and cousin Joan, to take, under Dr. Powell, what would now be called a rest-cure. The rest included, however, a good deal of quiet work at botany and many concerts at the Crystal Palace; but Ruskin's diary contains indications of physical discomfort and nervous

depression. A letter to Acland shows that he was in ill humour with the world. Acland, who was one of the Curators of the Oxford University Galleries, seems to have contemplated resigning the office, with a view to getting Ruskin appointed in his place; this arrangement would have brought Ruskin occasionally to the University, and perhaps have led him to give lectures there upon the art collections. Ruskin's reply was this:—

“*23rd September 1867.*—Not in despair nor in sick sloth, but in a deep, though stern hope, and in reserve of what strength is in me, I refuse to talk about art. The English nation is fast, and with furious acceleration, becoming a mob to whom it will be impossible to talk about *anything*. Read the last seven verses of yesterday's first Lesson.<sup>1</sup> They are literally, and in every syllable, true of England, and the weapons with which such evil may be stayed before ‘the end thereof’ are not camel's-hair pencils. Camel's-hair raiment might do something. . . . If you are tired of that curatorship and think that I can be of any use, I will do the best I can. But in no phrase of politeness I tell you that you are fitter for the place than I, and working with your old friend the Dean, and entering into the fruit of your efforts for many years, you had much better stay as you are, if you are not weary.”

Acland seemed to think that this conditional acceptance was sufficient; but another friend of Ruskin, of less enthusiastic temperament, was more cautious. “Are you positively certain,” wrote Dean Liddell, “that Ruskin would like to be Curator of the Galleries? Have you it in writing? And can his inclination or wish in August be depended upon in November?” Liddell's cold water stopped the scheme, and Ruskin's call to Oxford was to come two years later in a different way.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah v. (lesson for the 14th Sunday after Trinity): “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. . . . They are waxen fat, they shine. . . .

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?”



## CHAPTER VIII

### RUSKIN'S POLITICAL ECONOMY

“‘So then, things are only property to the man who knows how to use them; as flutes, for instance, are property to the man who can pipe upon them respectably; but to one who knows not how to pipe, they are no property, unless he can get rid of them advantageously. For if they are not sold, the flutes are no property, being serviceable for nothing; but sold, they become property.’ To which Socrates made answer,—‘And only then if he knows how to sell them, for if he sells them to another man who cannot play on them, still they are no property.’”—XENOPHON (*The Economist*).

#### I

WITH *Time and Tide* Ruskin's writing on economics ceased for a while. He never put his economic work, either on its critical or on its constructive side, into connected form. He wrote by snatches; and he wrote in fierce indignation. Also he wrote allusively, giving rein to his fancy in following up any clue in literature or mythology which seemed suggestive of his conclusions. One can sympathise with the City man who is said to have given up Ruskin's essays in despair, on finding that, according to this new counsellor, the principles of sound economics required a familiarity with Scylla, Charybdis, Circe, the “Gran Nemico” of Dante, and Spenser's Plutus. Ruskin himself was aware, in half-mocking humility, of the extent to which his writing fell short (if such be the case) of the calm and orderly style of other economists. “I really *am* getting practical,” he wrote to Professor Norton (June 24, 1869); “and I'm thinking of writing Hamlet's soliloquy into Norton-and-Mill-esque: ‘The question which under these circumstances must present itself to the intelligent mind, is whether to exist, or not to exist,’ etc.” But that, as we all know, was not Ruskin's

way; and least of all when he wrote under stress of strong emotion. His friends counselled him to be cheerful, to keep calm, to moderate the force of his expressions. "Those expressions," he replied, "may do me harm, or do me good; what is that to me? They are the only true, right, or possible expressions. The Science of Political Economy is a Lie,—wholly and to the very root (as hitherto taught). It is also the Damnedest,—that is to say, the most utterly and to the lowest pit condemned of God and his Angels—that the Devil, or Betrayer of Men, has yet invented, except his (the Devil's) theory of Sanctification. To this 'science,' and to this alone (the professed and organised pursuit of Money) is owing *All* the evil of modern days. I say *All*. The Monastic theory is at an end. It is now the Money theory which corrupts the Church, corrupts the household life, destroys honour, beauty, and life throughout the universe. It is *the* Death incarnate of Modernism, and the so-called science of its pursuit is the most cretinous, speechless, paralysing plague that has yet touched the brains of mankind."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin goes on to say that he thus wrote coolly and deliberately; but at any rate he wrote in what Carlyle called "divine rage."

Ruskin's writings on political economy were part of the inmost life of the man; expressions of his passion and his pity; a logical development of his artistic work; a necessary condition of his peace. "I write these letters," he said in *Time and Tide*, "not in any hope of their being at present listened to, but to disburthen my heart of the witness I have to bear, that I may be free to go back to my garden lawns, and paint birds and flowers there." His Political Economy was thus part of his personality; but has it any other, and independent, value? The question must be considered in any sufficient Life of him, for on the answer to it depends in some measure the estimate to be formed of the quality of his mind, and of his work and influence in the world.

There was in Ruskin's mind a scheme of economics more comprehensive than any which he actually wrote.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Dr. John Brown, August 1862.

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It was threefold. He sought to overthrow the basis of the doctrine accepted in his time; to outline a scheme of Social Economy which should take its place; and to show how his principles would work out in laws, customs, and institutions. His three books—*Unto this Last*, *Munera Pulveris*, and *Time and Tide*—cover to some extent the same ground and often overlap; yet looked at broadly, they may be said to correspond to the threefold division just stated. Each of them, however, was but an introduction to the subject with which it was designed to deal; and each was fragmentary, but from them taken together it is possible to form some general idea of Ruskin's principles.

## II

He sought, first, to overthrow the basis of the old "political"—or, as he more truly called it, "mercantile"—economy. Its basis was false, he urged, in isolating man from the social affections. The abstraction would be legitimate if the factors thus eliminated made only a quantitative difference; it is nugatory, because they make a qualitative difference. He compared the orthodox Political Economy to "a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons":—

"It might be shown, on that supposition, that it would be advantageous to roll the students up into pellets, flatten them into cakes, or stretch them into cables; and that when these results were effected, the re-insertion of the skeleton would be attended with various inconveniences to their constitution. The reasoning might be admirable, the conclusions true, and the science deficient only in applicability. Modern political economy stands on a precisely similar basis. Assuming, not that the human being has no skeleton, but that it is all skeleton, it founds an ossifiant theory of progress on this negation of a soul; and having shown the utmost that may be made of bones, and constructed a number of interesting geometrical figures with death's-head and humeri, successfully proves the inconvenience of the reappearance of a soul among these corpuscular structures."

No good master and no good servant eliminates the social affections. The relations of a commander and his men are not based on such elimination. Why is the soldier held in superior honour to the manufacturer or the merchant? Because the latter is seen to act in the main selfishly. The riches of a State will be greatest where there are Captains of Industry working under a code of unselfish honour. Hence the title of Ruskin's first chapter in *Unto this Last*—"The Roots of Honour."

The basis of the current economy was false, secondly, in isolating the individual from society. The "riches" with which it is concerned mean the establishment of the maximum inequality in favour of particular persons. The idea that such inequalities are necessarily advantageous is at the root of economic fallacy, assuming that "money gain is mouth gain." In fact, they are good or bad for the general community according to the methods by which they are acquired, and the purposes to which they are applied. Hence it is futile to isolate the accumulation of wealth from considerations of justice, and wealth itself from "the moral signs attached to it." These signs are, from the point of view of the community, material attributes of riches. "The Veins of Wealth," he called his second essay:—

"Since the essence of wealth consists in power over men, will it not follow that the nobler and the more in number the persons are over whom it has power, the greater the wealth? Perhaps it may even appear, after some consideration, that the persons themselves *are* the wealth—that these pieces of gold with which we are in the habit of guiding them, are, in fact, nothing more than a kind of Byzantine harness or trappings, very glittering and beautiful in barbaric sight, wherewith we bridle the creatures; but that if these same living creatures could be guided without the fretting and jingling of the Byzants in their mouths and ears, they might themselves be more valuable than their bridles. In fact, it may be discovered that the true veins of wealth are purple—and not in Rock, but in Flesh—perhaps even that the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many



CHAP. as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human  
VIII. creatures. . . . In some far-away and yet undreamt-of hour, I can even imagine that England may cast all thoughts of possessive wealth back to the barbaric nations among whom they first arose ; and that, while the sands of the Indus and adamant of Golconda may yet stiffen the housings of the charger, and flash from the turban of the slave, she, as a Christian mother, may at last attain to the virtues and the treasures of a Heathen one, and be able to lead forth her Sons, saying, ' These are MY Jewels.' "

The current economy is at fault further, Ruskin urged, in giving no precise or correct definition of wealth. In the Preface to *Unto this Last* and, again, in that to *Munera Pulveris* he makes the criticism :—

"The most reputed essay on the subject which has appeared in modern times, after opening with the statement that 'writers on political economy profess to teach, or to investigate, the nature of wealth,' thus follows up the declaration of its thesis—'Every one has a notion, sufficiently correct for common purposes, of what is meant by wealth.' . . . 'It is no part of the design of this treatise to aim at metaphysical nicety of definition.' . . . And Mr. Mill contentedly proceeded, as if a chemist should proceed to investigate the laws of chemistry without endeavouring to ascertain the nature of fire or water, because every one had a notion of them, 'sufficiently correct for common purposes.'

"Metaphysical nicety, we assuredly do not need ; but physical nicety, and logical accuracy, with respect to a physical subject, we as assuredly do. Suppose the subject of inquiry, instead of being House-law (*Oikonomia*), had been Star-law (*Astronomia*), and that, ignoring distinction between stars fixed and wandering, as here between wealth radiant and wealth reflective, the writer had begun thus : 'Every one has a notion, sufficiently correct for common purposes, of what is meant by stars. Metaphysical nicety in the definition of a star is not the object of this treatise' ;—the essay so opened might yet have been far more true in its final statements, and a thousand-fold more serviceable to the navigator, than any treatise on wealth, which founds its conclusions on the popular conception of wealth, can ever become to the economist."

In *Munera Pulveris* Ruskin gives his own definitions—*wealth*, “things in themselves valuable”; *money*, “documentary claims to such things”; *riches*, “the relation of one person’s possessions to another”; *value*, “the life-giving power of thing,” which involves both essential usefulness and the capacity to use it; *cost*, “the quantity of labour required to produce a thing”; and *price*, “the quantity of labour which the possessor of a thing will take in exchange for it.” Then he enumerates and describes valuable things, laying special stress on land as providing objects of sight and thought, and thus on national scenery as an element of national wealth. He amplifies his definition of wealth by contrasting it with current views. A thing does not become wealth merely by becoming an object of desire. The worth of things depends on the use of them, not on the demand for them. Guardianship is not possession:—

(*To the* REV. W. L. BROWN.) 1860.—“You will, on thinking steadily over the matter, find that my definition is *not* wider than the Political Economists’. Theirs is as wide as mine. Only it is false. They mean by wealth—money or money’s *worth*, and they say money’s *worth* is determinable irrespectively of moral faculties. I say—your money’s worth depends wholly upon your own head and heart—*cod*’s head or man’s head, as it happens to be. You buy a horse for a hundred guineas. If you can ride him, he is worth your guineas—may be worth immeasurably more than one hundred guineas. If you can’t ride him, he may be worth—a broken neck to you. You have paid your hundred guineas for an executioner on four legs. That is not an imaginative or theoretical way of putting it. It is pure, simple, mercantile fact.”

Wealth is “the possession of useful articles which we can use”; or “the possession of the valuable by the valiant.” Many things popularly accounted “wealth,” and many persons accounted wealthy, are in fact only forms of “illth.” In a community regulated only by laws of demand and supply, “the persons who remain poor are the entirely foolish, the entirely wise, the idle, the reckless, the humble, the thoughtful, the dull, the imaginative, the

CHAP. sensitive, the well-informed, the improvident, the irregularly and impulsively wicked, the clumsy knave, the open thief, and the entirely merciful, just, and godly person." Labour may be either positive (that which produces life) or negative (that which produces death). The prosperity of a nation depends on the quantity of labour it expends in obtaining and employing means of life; wise consumption is the crown of production:—

“THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others. A strange political economy; the only one, nevertheless, that ever was or can be: all political economy founded on self-interest being but the fulfilment of that which once brought schism into the Policy of angels, and ruin into the Economy of Heaven.”

“A strange political economy”; for to Ruskin it meant “the science of getting rich by just means.” The current “law” of “demand and supply” is in opposition to the law of justice. The economic advantages of the payment of just wages are the main theme of the third essay in *Unto this Last*, entitled “Qui Judicatis Terram.”

### III

Such in briefest and roughest outline is the gist of Ruskin's political economy. Is it sentiment, or is it science? In one sense it is quite true, as his critics asserted at the time, that he sought to substitute sentiment for science. He did seek to substitute human feeling for scientific abstraction. His object was to humanise the science of Political Economy; to translate its abstractions into the concrete facts of flesh and blood which stood behind them; and to this end he directed all the resources of his sympathetic imagination, his powers of acute observation and analysis, and the resources of his literary art. But

essentially Ruskin's attack on the Political Economy current in his time was scientific. His fundamental conceptions were two, and both are in accord with scientific facts. In the first place, he insisted that man is an organic unity, and that the science which aims at treating the conduct of man in society must have a corresponding unity. Ruskin was a pioneer in the work of reconstituting Political Economy on a more real and a more scientific basis; a pioneer in the study of Social Economics. The second conception at the base of Ruskin's economic writings is biological. "Let us leave," says Professor Geddes, "the inmates of the academic cloister; walk out into the world, look about us, try to express loaf and diamond from the objective side in terms of actual fact, and we find that physical and physiological properties or 'values' can indeed indefinitely be assigned: the one is so much fuel, its heat-giving power measurable in calorimeter, or in actual units of work; the other a definite sensory stimulus, varying according to Fechner's law. This is precisely what our author means in such a passage as the following, which, however absurd to the orthodox, is now intelligible enough to us: 'Intrinsic value is the absolute power of anything to support life,' etc."<sup>1</sup> "It is interesting then to note," says the same writer, "that the shout of 'sentiment *versus* science,' with which Mr. Ruskin has been for so many years turned out of court, did after all accurately enough describe the controversy; . . . the inductive logic and statistics, the physics and chemistry, the biology and medicine, the psychology and education were all essentially on the side of Mr. Ruskin; while on the other were too often sheer blindness to the actual facts of human and social life—organism, function, and environment alike—concealed by illusory abstractions, baseless assumptions, and feeble metaphors . . . and frozen into dismal and repellent form by a theory of moral sentiments which assumed moral temperature at its absolute zero."

The extent to which Ruskin's doctrines have permeated (or, at any rate, are in harmony with) the reconstruction of Political Economy may perhaps best be shown by an extract

<sup>1</sup> *John Ruskin, Economist*, by Patrick Geddes, F.R.S., 1884, p. 26.



CHAP. from Professor Ingram's History of the subject. He thus  
VIII. summarises the lines along which the reconstruction must proceed:—

“Wealth having been conceived as what satisfies desires, the definitely determinable qualities possessed by some objects of supplying physical energy, and improving the physiological constitution, are left out of account. Everything is gauged by the standard of subjective notions and desires. All desires are viewed as equally legitimate, and all that satisfies our desires as equally wealth. Value being regarded as the result of a purely mental appreciation, the social value of things in the sense of their objective utility, which is often scientifically measurable, is passed over, and ratio of exchange is exclusively considered. The truth is, that at the bottom of all economic investigation must lie the idea of the destination of wealth for the maintenance and evolution of a society. And, if we overlook this, our economics will become a play of logic or a manual for the market, rather than a contribution to social science; whilst wearing an air of completeness, they will be in truth one-sided and superficial. . . .

“Economics must be constantly regarded as forming only one department of the larger science of Sociology, in vital connexion with its other departments, and with the moral synthesis which is the crown of the whole intellectual system. . . . Especially must we keep in view the high moral issues to which the economic movement is subservient, and in the absence of which it could never in any great degree attract the interest or fix the attention either of eminent thinkers or of right-minded men. . . . A doctrine of duty will have to be substituted, fixing on positive grounds the nature of the social co-operation of each class and each member of the community, and the rules which must regulate its just and beneficial exercise.”<sup>1</sup>

All this would serve as an abstract of the leading ideas in *Unto this Last* and *Munera Pulveris*.

Ruskin pointed, then, the way in which a system of Social Economics might be based upon a scientific foundation. Many of his detailed criticisms have also had their

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Political Economy*, 1888, pp. 241–243.

share in modifying economic theory. "English economists of the present day," says a recent writer, "generally recognise the importance of the theory of consumption, and that it is misleading to speak of wealth as a definite mass of material objects, like the goods in a warehouse, that can be measured without regard to the persons using them; and as a rule it is no longer affirmed that the value of most things depends on their cost of production."<sup>1</sup> These amendments, as we have seen, were urged in the early 'sixties by Ruskin. Mill's doctrine, too, that "a demand for commodities is not a demand for labour" is now withdrawn by leading economists;<sup>2</sup> it has never been refuted so effectively as by Ruskin, whose biological principle may here also be illustrated. "A demand for commodities is a demand for labour; it determines function, and therefore quality of organism."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Ruskin himself, at two points at least in his economic system, was led into serious error by insufficient adherence to his own principle. He attacked the whole process of lending capital as "unproductive," and he described the whole process of exchange as "nugatory," asserting that there can be no "profit" in it—a position strangely inconsistent with his fundamental conception of wealth as something that can be increased by placing the right things in the right hands. The prominence which these two propositions assumed in his later writings did much to obscure the essential soundness of his other criticisms.

## IV

How was Ruskin's system of social economy intended to work out in law, customs, and institutions? Have his economic theories exercised any influence upon the political practice of the time? In the Preface to *Unto this Last* (1862), he stated in seven propositions "the worst of the

<sup>1</sup> "Lessons from Ruskin," in the *Economic Journal*, March 1898, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Professor J. S. Nicholson's *Principles of Political Economy*, 1893, vol. i. pp. 101–103. Yet as late as 1874 Leslie

Stephen cited Ruskin's repudiation of the dogma as an inexplicable perversity (see his review of "Mr. Ruskin's Recent Writings," *Fraser's Magazine*, June 1874).

<sup>3</sup> *John Ruskin, Economist*, p. 37.

CHAP. political creed" to which he wished his principles to lead.  
VIII. The reforms thus advocated were:—

1. National Schools for the young to be established at Government cost and under Government discipline over the whole country.
2. Every child to be taught, further, some trade or calling.
3. In connexion with these technical classes, Government workshops to be established, at which, without any attempt at establishing a monopoly, "good and exemplary work should be done, and pure and true substance sold."
4. Any person out of employment to be set forthwith to work at the nearest Government workshop.
5. Such work to be paid for at a fixed rate in each employment.
6. Those who would work if they could, to be taught. Those who could work if they would, to be set to penal work.
7. For the old and destitute comfort and home to be provided.

Such suggestions were at the time received with violent reprobation or contemptuous laughter; but the "mad governess"<sup>1</sup> has governed after all. Every one of the points in Ruskin's unauthorised programme has by this time either been put into operation (whole or partial), or is a subject of discussion among practical politicians. Nos. 1 and 2—elementary and technical education—need not detain us. Proposal No. 3—for Government workshops—is still only matter of discussion. But the growing conception of the State as Model Employer, and the modern extensions of anti-adulteration laws, are steps in the direction intended by Ruskin. The next proposal (No. 4)—Government work for the unemployed—has passed from the pages of political idealists to discussion in Parliament. The occasional establishment of Municipal Relief Works, the acceptance of a certain responsibility involved in the foundation of a Labour Department, a *Labour Gazette* and Labour Bureaus, and recent legislation for the establishment of Relief Committees with power to levy rates and with subsidies from the State: these things are all in line with Ruskin's doctrines. Under No. 5 (Fixed Wages) fall the growing adoption, both by the central and by the municipal

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 6.

authorities, of the principle of Fair Wages or of Trade-Union wages, and the recent establishment in certain industries of Wages Boards. More and more the principle upon which Ruskin insisted is gaining ground; the principle that wages should be fixed, not solely by “supply and demand,” but by “balances of justice.” Reversing the order of the last two points in Ruskin’s programme, I come next to “provision for the old and destitute”; a proposal made more definite in *The Political Economy of Art*<sup>1</sup> in the suggestion of Old Age Pensions. This is now the law of the land. Nor is it irrelevant in this connexion to recall how insistent Ruskin was in all his economic writings upon the necessity of regularity in employment. His memorable saying, “Soldiers of the Ploughshare as well as Soldiers of the Sword,” is a motto of many social reformers; and Ruskin had another dream: he was Utopian to believe, half a century ago, that some day we should have a Government “which shall distribute more proudly its golden crosses of industry than now it grants its bronze crosses of honour.” I do not know about the “more proudly”; but did not this “eruption of windy hysterics” come true also in some sort when his late Majesty instituted an Edward Cross for heroes of industry to take its place beside the Victoria Cross for heroes of the battlefield? But I must return to *Unto this Last*. The more such schemes are realised as Ruskin adumbrated for providing employment, insurance, and a minimum wage, the more will the necessity be felt for penalising the loafer. Recent Reports and recommendations show that it is coming to be felt already. And this was proposal No. 6 in Ruskin’s programme. “The law of national health,” he explains, “is like that of a great lake or sea, in perfect but slow circulation, letting the dregs continually fall to the lowest place, and the clear waters rise.”<sup>2</sup>

Such, then, were the reforms, inherent in his system of social economy, which Ruskin hoped might become practical politics in the near future. With regard to the wider range of his suggestions for an ideal community, I shall have something more to say in connexion with St. George’s Guild

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> *Munera Pulveris*, § 109.



CHAP. and its monthly organ, *Fors Clavigera*, for that later book  
VIII. was a sort of continuation of *Time and Tide*; but here I may make a general remark applicable to both of the books. We must distinguish between ultimate ideals, and general principles towards which each individual may contribute something of realisation. The principles upon which Ruskin laid most stress had relation to the duties of landlords, employers, and "bishops," respectively. In politics, he was a disciple of Plato. He sought to reconstruct society on the Platonic conception of Justice—assigning to each man his due place, and requiring from each man the fulfilment of his duties. To him, as to Plato, the health and happiness of all the citizens was the sole end of legislation, and the rule of the wisest was the surest method of securing it. But, as Lord Morley has said, "neither Ruskin nor his stormy teacher ever intelligibly told us" by what path other than freedom the rule of the wisest is to be got.<sup>1</sup> And therein lies the real answer to all criticisms of democracy. Any one can show theoretical objections, aye and practical also, "to rule by vote of the odd man," but who can show a path to which the objections are not greater? Ruskin seems to have had some idea of an educational franchise and plural voting;<sup>2</sup> but is it so certain that such devices secure the rule of the wisest for the purpose in hand? Another of Carlyle's disciples at one time saw the point here clearly enough, though in a different connexion. "In matters which affect life and conduct," wrote Froude in his "Times of Erasmus and Luther," "the interests and prejudices of the cultivated classes are enlisted on the side of the existing order of things, and their better-trained faculties and larger acquirements serve only to find them arguments for believing what they wish to believe. Simpler men have less to lose; they come more in contact with the realities of life, and they learn wisdom in the experience of suffering." But Ruskin after all was not greatly concerned in political systems. He looked more to the spirit than to the form. To the landlords he said, The land is

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. p. 582.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 276, and *Munera Pulveris*, § 129.

yours, only on condition that you hold it in trust for the rearing and tending of healthy and happy life. To the employers he said, Your business is to be "captains" of industry, trustees of the wealth you hold. To the workmen, "Do good work whether you live or die." To the State at large he said, Your political reforms, your "unexampled prosperity" are all meaningless and worthless so long as masses of your people are herded together in soul-destroying conditions of life. To the "bishops" he said, Yours is the duty of over-seeing the flock of Christ's people, and of preaching to the rich their duties to the poor. The forms into which Ruskin threw his reconstruction of society belong to the sphere of Utopian suggestion. The essential thing was the spirit which was to influence it and the end to which it was to be directed. This is what he means when he says that "it is no business of his to think about possibilities";<sup>1</sup> he was concerned only to lay down the principles which were essential to sound reform, in whatever form it might be embodied. For instance: in what he says about a "Doge of Sheffield" and his duties, the root of the matter is not in the title given to the appointed officer, but in the pleading for a quickened sense of obligation, on the part of the municipal authorities, to use their powers for the promotion of public health and the protection of the food of the people from impurity or adulteration. He did not expect any great or sudden changes. He knew perfectly well the interval that separates counsels of perfection from practicable reforms. We shall never see the realisation of Ruskin's Utopia; and yet each man may realise it for himself. For "the better Burg which shall be for ever" is "the City which is our own."<sup>2</sup> "Whether there really is or ever will be such a city is of no importance to him who desires to see it, for he will act according to the laws of that city and of no other."<sup>3</sup> The ideal cities of wise men and good are built

"To music, therefore never built at all,  
And therefore built for ever."

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 67.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 82, and the title of Letter 37.

<sup>3</sup> Plato's *Republic*, end of Book ix.

## CHAPTER IX

### ABBEVILLE AND VERONA

(1868, 1869)

"My writing is so entirely at present the picture of my mind that it seems to me as if the one must be as inscrutable as the other. For indeed I am quite unable from any present crises to judge of what is best for me to do. There is so much misery and error in the world which I see I could have immense power to set various human influences against, by giving up my science and art, and wholly trying to teach peace and justice; and yet my own gifts seem so specially directed towards quiet investigation of beautiful things that I cannot make up my mind, and my writing is as vacillating as my temper."—RUSKIN (Letter to his mother, May 25, 1868).

#### I

RUSKIN spent the winter of 1867-68 quietly at home, and many friends came to see him at Denmark Hill; but this was not always unalloyed pleasure. "Mama provoking in abuse of people," is a significant entry in the diary. His mother was affectionate, but also exacting and somewhat censorious; she was firmly persuaded that only the pernicious influence of ill-chosen friends had seduced her son from the evangelical principles which she had inculcated in his youth. She liked, too, to be mistress in her own house; and now that advancing years had confirmed her in habits of great regularity and precision, she did not always welcome the sight of new faces and unexpected guests. We have seen, in the recollections of a visitor at an earlier date,<sup>1</sup> with what beautiful deference Ruskin treated his mother, and this was always his attitude, though sometimes he would venture indirectly to answer her reproaches. "At dinner,"

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. p. 483.

says Lady Burne-Jones, "if anything her son said, though not addressed to herself, did not reach her ear, she demanded to have it repeated, and from her end of the table came a clear thread of voice, 'John—John Ruskin—what was that you said?' When the sharply questioning sound at last penetrated to him, he never failed with the utmost respect to repeat his words for her." The instinct for contradiction was strong in her, and her son's impulsive and enthusiastic talk often called it into exercise. "I remember an evening spent with her and her son," adds Lady Burne-Jones, "when Edward read aloud, from Lane's *Arabian Nights*, the Story of the Barber, in which there is scarce a paragraph without some mention of God, the High, the Great, and at its conclusion Ruskin expressed great admiration for it. 'God forgive you, my child,' said a pitying voice from the fire-side; and as we waited in silent astonishment for some explanation, she continued, 'for taking His name in vain.' Her son listened with perfect patience and dignity, and then, almost as if thinking aloud, answered with a solemn and simple refutation of the charge and a noble definition of what taking the name of God in vain really was. Would that I could remember his words! His mother seemed quite unmoved."<sup>1</sup> She was given to combating his opinions strongly and publicly; the remark, "John, you are talking great nonsense," was often heard; and she would never admit any doubt of her own infallibility. But though she reserved to herself full liberty to criticise and contradict her son, yet no one was more sensitive than she to any criticism of him by others: she liked, and expected, to see her bairn respected. And this was one reason why she resented anything which she considered as an attempt to impose upon his credulity or generosity. If her circle of interests was narrow, and her outlook on the problems of life and destiny confined within fixed and strict ideas, her reading of character was often as penetrating in substance as it was sharp in expression. Ruskin's tact and readiness smoothed over the outbursts which were thus caused, and no one ever visited Denmark Hill without being struck by his gentle

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. pp. 252, 300.



CHAP. IX. submissiveness. But such reminiscences as have here been brought together serve to explain the entry in his diary, given above, or this passage in a letter to Professor Norton: "I'm very weary and sad. Joan is gone away—and the evening's sitting beside my mother only makes me sadder still." His cousin Joan was the good angel in many domestic difficulties, and her presence at Denmark Hill during these years was an equal comfort to the mother and to the son. Ruskin's relations with his cousin are pleasantly illustrated in many a letter: they had become the closer from her friendship with Miss La Touche and her family:—

(*To MISS JOAN AGNEW.*) "DENMARK HILL, *March* 4, 1868. . . . I make you a poor little present (though, indeed, the poorest present to my wee *amie* would be any foolish trinket that thought it could make her look prettier!). This is only a foolish trinket that will try to amuse her. Respecting which, however, she may sometimes, not unprofitably, reflect—

"1. That the great virtue of Kinghood is to be unmoved on attack.

"2. That the worthiest person on the field is a woman.

"3. That Knights are active creatures who never let anything stand in their way.

"4. That Bishops are people who never look—or move—straight before them.

"5. That Castles may not unwisely be built in the air, if they are carried by an Elephant—who is the type of prudence. And that a Castle which has been useless on one side, may usefully pass to the other.

"6. That Pawns and Patience can do anything.

"7th—and generally. That when things are seemingly at the worst, they may often mend—that we should always look well about us; and that everybody is wrong who isn't helping everybody else within his reach.

"Finally—let me hope for you that in all things, as in chess, you may bear an equal mind in loss or conquest, and remain your gentle self in both."

(*To the same.*) "WINNINGTON, *May* 1868. . . . I hope for a little letter to-day, but I write this before I get one, to tell you

how sorry I am to let you leave me, and how little all the pleasantness and brightness of affection which I receive here makes up to me for the want of the perfect rest which I have in your constant and simple regard. . . . With you I am always now at rest—being sure that you know how I value you, and that whatever I say or don't say to you, you won't mind; besides all the help that I get from your knowledge of all my little ways and inner thoughts."

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## II

During the winter of 1867-68 Ruskin was much occupied by a series of papers which he contributed to the *Geological Magazine* "On Banded and Brecciated Concretions." "Elaborate papers," said Professor Rupert Jones of them, "illustrated by some exquisite plates and many clear diagrams, a most valuable source of facts and suggestions to the student of agates."<sup>1</sup> Some of the beautiful plates, engraved by Mr. Allen from Ruskin's drawings, were afterwards repeated in *Deucalion*. "My analysis of the structure of agates," he said in the preface to that book (1875), "remains, even to the present day, the only one which has the slightest claim to accuracy of distinction or completeness of arrangement." The conclusions, first hinted at in these papers, which further study confirmed in Ruskin's mind, were thus stated by him in 1884:—

"I. That a large number of agates, and other siliceous substances, hitherto supposed to be rolled pebbles in a conglomerate paste, are in truth crystalline secretions out of that paste in situ, as garnets out of mica-slate.

"II. That a large number of agates, hitherto supposed to be formed by broken fragments of older agate, cemented by a gelatinous chalcedony, are indeed secretions out of a siliceous fluid containing miscellaneous elements, and their apparent fractures are indeed produced by the same kind of tranquil division which terminates the bands in banded flints.

"III. That the contortions in gneiss and other metamorphic

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<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, vol. iv. p. 445.

CHAP. rocks, constantly ascribed by geologists to pressure, are only modes  
IX. of crystallization.

"And IV. That many of the faults and contortions produced on a large scale in metamorphic rocks, are owing to the quiet operation of similar causes."<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin, in his minute studies of nature, took also a wide-glancing view.

### III

The spring of 1868 was bright, and Ruskin's mood responded to it. At the beginning of the year he had a good omen: "Dreamed on night of 2nd-3rd (January) of seeing Lake of Constance, in lovely light—under sweet crisping wind and mountains far away." And, in the life of waking hours, "Could do nothing but stare at the blue sky, and flowers, and intense brightness" (February 29). In recording a dream at a later date (Nov. 2), Ruskin says, "Dreamed of being in Verona, or some place that was and wasn't Venice. Met an Englishman who said 'he had been staring at things.' I said I was glad to hear it—to stare was the right thing, to *look* only was no use."<sup>2</sup> The Turners on the walls flashed back the glory of the days: "Up a minute or two before five. Lovely clear sunrise. Greta and Tees<sup>3</sup> looking prettier than ever. Read geology at my breakfast, with my two loveliest flint chalcedonies shining in the sun." And hope shone brightly, too. On May 4 a letter came from Ireland, which Ruskin notes in his diary by the one word "Peace." At Easter-time he had written an Introduction to a re-issue of the English translation of the *Märchen* by the Brothers Grimm with Cruikshank's illustrations. A letter written in 1883 after one of his illnesses, in which Ruskin fears that he "can never more write things rich in thought like the preface to Grimm," indicates the importance which he attached to this discussion of the ethics of Fairy Stories and of the

<sup>1</sup> Postscript to *The Distinctions of Form in Silica*, printed in *In Montibus Sanctis*.

<sup>2</sup> His mother used to say that as a child, when his attention was

fixed, his eyes looked as if they would fall out of his head.

<sup>3</sup> The drawing by Turner, afterwards given by Ruskin to his School at Oxford,

principles which should govern books for children. One passage must have come from his inmost heart at the time:—

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“As the simplicity of the sense of beauty has been lost in recent tales for children, so also the simplicity of their conception of love. That word which, in the heart of a child, should represent the most constant and vital part of its being; which ought to be the sign of the most solemn thoughts that inform its awakening soul and, in one wide mystery of pure sunrise, should flood the zenith of its heaven, and gleam on the dew at its feet; this word, which should be consecrated on its lips, together with the Name which it may not take in vain, and whose meaning should soften and animate every emotion through which the inferior things and the feeble creatures, set beneath it in its narrow world, are revealed to its curiosity or companionship;—this word, in modern child-story, is too often restrained and darkened into the hieroglyph of an evil mystery, troubling the sweet peace of youth with premature gleams of uncomprehended passion, and flitting shadows of unrecognized sin.”

Ruskin now set himself with renewed zest to write a lecture which he was to deliver in Dublin, for the sake of her who had sent him the message of peace. This was the lecture entitled “The Mystery of Life and its Arts,” which he added to the later editions of *Sesame and Lilies*. It was delivered in Dublin on May 13, 1868. It was one of a series of Afternoon Lectures on various subjects arranged by a Committee of the principal residents in Dublin. The lectures were given in the theatre of the Royal College of Science; but in Ruskin’s case, “so great was the demand for tickets, that the place had to be changed to the Concert Hall of the Exhibition Palace. Long before the hour appointed for the lecture the hall was crowded, about 2000 persons being present.”<sup>1</sup> “I put into it,” he said once to an intimate friend, “all that I knew”; and to the like effect he wrote that certain passages of it “contain the best expression I have yet been able to put in words of what, so far as is within my power, I mean henceforward both to do myself, and to plead with all over

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, May 14, 1868.



CHAP. whom I have any influence to do according to their means."<sup>1</sup>  
 IX. From a different standpoint, a distinguished critic has endorsed Ruskin's preference for this piece of work. "'The Mystery of Life and its Arts' is, to my mind," wrote Leslie Stephen, "the most perfect of his essays. Perhaps," adds that cheeriest of pessimists, "I am a little prejudiced by its confession, franker than usual, of the melancholy conviction that, after all, life is a mystery, and no solution really satisfactory. It is a good bit of pessimism, especially if you omit the moral at the end."<sup>2</sup> It was precisely in "the moral at the end" that Ruskin afterwards found the saving salt of the essay: it contained, he said, "the entire gist and conclusion" of the other lectures in the volume. And it was because of the partly pessimistic tone in the earlier portion of the lecture that in some later editions he omitted the whole discourse. At the time when the lecture was written, however, its tone was characteristic partly of Ruskin's own thought, and wholly of the standpoint which he then took in addressing the public. But its personal and esoteric address was to the girl who was sore at heart and sometimes alienated from him for his wandering in Bye-path meadow.<sup>3</sup> He passes in review the mysteries of life, and sums them all in the crowning mystery of the indifference of mankind to the purpose of its life. But does it indeed pass "as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away"? The call of duty is the same, however the question may be answered:—

"Because you have no heaven to look for, is that any reason that you should remain ignorant of this wonderful and infinite earth, which is firmly and instantly given you in possession? Although your days are numbered, and the following darkness sure, is it necessary that you should share the degradation of the brute, because you are condemned to its mortality; or live the life of the moth, and of the worm, because you are to companion them in the dust? . . . Let us do the work of men while we bear the form of them; and, as we snatch our narrow portion of time

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Sesame and Lilies*, ed. 1871, § 5.

<sup>2</sup> *National Review*, April 1900.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 84.

out of Eternity, snatch also our narrow inheritance of passion out of Immortality—even though our lives *be* as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. CHAP.  
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“But there are some of you who believe not this—who think this cloud of life has no such close—that it is to float, revealed and illumined, upon the floor of heaven, in the day when He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. . . . If that be true, far more than that must be true. Is there but one day of judgment? Why, for us every day is a day of judgment—every day is a *Dies Iræ*, and writes its irrevocable verdict in the flame of its West. Think you that judgment waits till the doors of the grave are opened? It waits at the doors of your houses—it waits at the corners of your streets; we are in the midst of judgment—the insects that we crush are our judges—the moments we fret away are our judges—the elements that feed us, judge, as they minister—and the pleasures that deceive us, judge, as they indulge.”

And so he concludes with “the moral at the end”—an appeal to his hearers “to do all the sure good we can”—sure good being “first in feeding people, then in dressing people, then in lodging people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people, with arts, or sciences, or any other subject of thought”:—

“On such holy and simple practice will be founded, indeed, at last, an infallible religion. The greatest of all the mysteries of life, and the most terrible, is the corruption of even the sincerest religion, which is not daily founded on rational, effective, humble, and helpful action. . . . I will not speak of the crimes which in past times have been committed in the name of Christ, nor of the follies which are at this hour held to be consistent with obedience to Him; but I *will* speak of the morbid corruption and waste of vital power in religious sentiment, by which the pure strength of that which should be the guiding soul of every nation, the splendour of its youthful manhood, and spotless light of its maidenhood, is averted or cast away.”

#### IV

On his return from Dublin, Ruskin threw himself for a while into public work. In July 1868 a special congress

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of the Social Science Association was held to consider the subject of Trade Unions and Strikes. At the first meeting Mr. Gladstone occupied the chair, and this is probably the only public occasion on which he and Ruskin appeared together. The proceedings ended, after the manner of such things, with the adoption of general resolutions which committed nobody to anything; but the debates afforded opportunity for a discussion of political economy at large. A member of the Association had printed a paper in 1860 “On the Predatory Instinct of Man, considered in relation to the Science of Social Economy.” “As no one will deny,” he wrote, “that man possesses carnivorous teeth, or that all animals that possess them are more or less predatory, it is unnecessary to argue that a predatory instinct naturally follows from such organisation.” The same point of view was taken at the discussion in 1868, the “orthodox” speakers arguing that “no sentiment ought to be brought into the subject” and that “the predatory instinct of man was the necessary ground-work of sound political economy.” Ruskin, whether predatory or not, could show his teeth in argument, and he fell upon these speakers with great energy; maintaining that man was an affectionate animal, and that any political economy which ignored the affections was a bastard science. He went on to propound a series of ironical questions to professors of political economy. His challenge was taken up in the newspapers, and there were lively discussions. This is the origin of the term “carnivorous” which Ruskin frequently applied in his later writings to the orthodox school of political economy. At a second meeting of the Association, there was a discussion on wages, and Ruskin, with some support from Mr. Tom Hughes, pleaded for the principle of fixed rates. In the following month there were “silly season” discussions in the *Daily Telegraph* on “Is England big enough?” and “Railway Fares.” Ruskin took the opportunity to intervene with letters in which he enforced the principle that the real national question is not who is losing or gaining wealth, but who is making and who destroying it. The discussion on Railways gave him an opening for questioning “the

beautiful law of supply and demand" and the blessings of unlimited competition. Here he was forty years before the time, for in these days combination and State control are taking the place of mere competition. Ruskin, however, went the whole length and urged the nationalisation of railways. The letter in which he sought to lay down principles for the delimitation of private and public enterprise is well worth reading in these modern days. Nor is it uninteresting to note that the "unpractical" Ruskin had in 1863 urged the establishment of a Government Parcels Post and the laying down of quadruple rails on all the main lines.

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## V

Later in the year (1868) Ruskin had an opportunity of returning to such questions, but meanwhile he went for a holiday and devoted himself to drawing. He chose, as being not too far from his mother at home, one of his favourite haunts—the town of Abbeville. He wished to re-study, and to draw with his now more accomplished skill, the flamboyant architecture which, as a boy, he had loved intensely. His diary and his letters show that he enjoyed more peace of mind during these months at Abbeville than had been his for a long time past:—

(*To his Mother.*) "*August 25.*—The old place is little spoiled yet, and I hope to get some valuable notes. The weather is lovely, and my first sketch has begun well, and I've had a walk afterwards on chalk hills, covered with scabious and bluebells, and I've ate a cutlet for lunch, and half a fowl and a whole pigeon and some Neuchâtel cheese for dinner, and I feel quite myself again."

"*Sunday evening, 7th September.*—I think you may like to know how my days are spent just now. I rise at six, get everything in order for the day, cast up accounts of previous one, to the last sou, and then go out for a stroll on the ramparts, where the effects of morning mists are lovely among the tall trees and huge red walls. I come in to breakfast—French roll and tea at eight—and read Italian history, Sismondi, till nine. Then I go out to draw, for two hours and a half, or a little over, always stopping before



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twelve. From twelve to one another stroll, about the streets, and so in to lunch—a chop or steak or bit of cold game. After that I write my letters and rest—generally falling asleep for a minute or two (though not so happily as beside you) till three. At three I go out again for my second drawing from three to five. At five I stop for the day, and start on my main walk from five to seven. At seven I come in to dinner (no pastry or dessert), and I have tea immediately afterwards, and so rest till half-past nine, and then to bed.”

“*September 9.*—I think I shall be able to write a little *Stones of Abbeville* when I have done, as I shall know every remnant of interest in the town.”

“*Sept. 18 (Diary).*—I went to my work for the first time this many and many a day singing a little to myself.”

“*October 19.*—I am glad to come home, though much mortified at having failed in half my plans, and done nothing compared to what I expected. But it is better than if I were displeased with all I *had* done. It isn’t Turner; and it isn’t Correggio; it isn’t even Prout; but it isn’t bad.”

The drawings which Ruskin thus made at Abbeville are among the most beautiful of his architectural studies. One of them, a pencil-drawing of the Market Place with St. Wulfran seen over the houses, has often been exhibited and reproduced. Ruskin’s diary shows that it was begun on September 10, and not finished on October 12; yet the wealth of detail does not interfere with the unity of the composition. This drawing, with others of the same time, may be seen at Oxford.

At Abbeville Ruskin had occasional distractions, in the visits of assistants and friends. Mr. William Ward joined him for a while. He had Downs, too, for a week, to show him how the French market-gardeners raised their melons. Professor Norton also visited him, and carried him off for a day or two to Paris, where they fell in with Longfellow. “There could not be a pleasanter dinner,” says Professor Norton, “than that which we had one evening at Meurice’s. Ruskin, Longfellow, and Appleton were each at his respectively unsurpassed best, and when late at night the little

company broke up, its members parted from each other as if all had been old friends.”<sup>1</sup> “Longfellow,” wrote Ruskin, “is a quiet and simple gentleman, neither specially frank nor reserved, somewhat grave, very pleasant, not amusing, strangely innocent and calm, caring little for things out of his own serene sphere.”

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## VI

Ruskin's main work at Abbeville was drawing; his intellectual interests were still much scattered. He was reading a good deal in the classics, and at one page of the diary he notes a morning spent on “planning concentration of work on antiquities.” But in the afternoon he came down from Athena in the Air, and worked at “paper on employment”—that is, the pamphlet of *Notes on the General Principles of Employment for the Destitute and Criminal Classes*, which he issued for private circulation later in the year.

This was the subject which absorbed much of Ruskin's time after his return home at the end of October. A committee had been formed of persons interested in the subject of the Unemployed; he was on the general committee, and also on the executive sub-committee. He had a point of view of his own which he put in the following resolution:—

“That this society believes that no ultimate good will be effected by any law which is based on the separation of the poor from other classes of society as objects of a scornful charity or recipients of unearned relief; but that every increasing social evil may be attacked at its foundation by the giving of useful employment at fixed rates of remuneration to all who are capable of work, and by the training to such useful employments of those who are now capable of them, under such systems of discipline as may tend at once to the encouragement of manly and honourable principles, and the direct repression of crime.”

In the *Notes* he elaborates these general propositions—insisting that employment is the true means of education

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Ruskin to Norton*, vol. i. p. 178.

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and reformation; pleading for the fuller use of vital muscular power; protesting against useless relief works; urging that the vicious idle should be set to compulsory work; and suggesting various directions, very much on the line of recent Commissions and Acts of Parliament, in which useful work might be provided—such as the development of roads and harbours, and the reclamation of waste land. He found a valuable coadjutor in Manning, and records some of his successes in the diary. “Hard fight on Committee; dine at Froude’s” (December 4); “Did grand piece of work on Committee” (December 1). In letters to Mrs. Norton, he gives a lively account of his difficulties and his devices:—

“I am tired to-day, for I had two committees yesterday—one *sub*; one general—and hard fighting and harder flattering, in both. In the *sub* three only of the five members came, including me; three were a quorum, and I was one against two—only able to hold my own by fencing for two hours. I got harm averted, and we parted like the three friends of the lake of Uri. . . .”

“Everybody sends me their opinions privately; I pick out what I want and prepare it as Mr. So-and-so’s patting it hard on the back.”

He saw the truth of the Jesuit Father’s saying, that the way to get things done is not to mind who gets the credit of doing them.

Professor Norton, who with his wife and family was at this time staying at Keston in Kent, has described how “Ruskin did everything to make our stay in the country pleasant, coming over to see us, often writing and sending books or water-colour drawings by Turner, himself, and others, to light up the somewhat dull rooms of the little old Rectory in which we were living; sending also gifts to my little children. . . . To give pleasure was his delight.” Keston is close to Downe, and on one occasion Professor Norton arranged a meeting between Ruskin and Darwin—thus renewing an acquaintance formed thirty-one years before.<sup>1</sup> “Ruskin’s gracious courtesy,” he says, “was matched by

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 76.

Darwin's charming and genial simplicity. Ruskin was full of questions which interested the elder naturalist by the keenness of observation and the variety of scientific attainment which they indicated."<sup>1</sup> The next morning Darwin rode over to say a pleasant word about Ruskin, and two days afterward Ruskin wrote, "Mr. Darwin was delightful." At a later date Darwin came over to see Ruskin at Denmark Hill, and Ruskin visited him at Downe. Darwin's son gives an amusing account of his father's courteous but feigned appreciation of the treasures of Denmark Hill:—

"With regard to questions of taste, as well as to more serious things, he always had the courage of his opinions. I remember, however, an instance that sounds like a contradiction to this: when he was looking at the Turners in Mr. Ruskin's bedroom, he did not confess, as he did afterwards, that he could make out absolutely nothing of what Mr. Ruskin saw in them. But this little pretence was not for his own sake, but for the sake of courtesy to his host. He was pleased and amused when subsequently Mr. Ruskin brought him some photographs of pictures (I think Vandyke portraits), and courteously seemed to value my father's opinion about them."<sup>2</sup>

There was a reference in Ruskin's next book to Darwin's "unwearied and unerring investigations";<sup>3</sup> and it could be wished that Ruskin had always observed the same amenity of tone in his published criticisms of the great naturalist's theories.

The other preoccupation which Ruskin notes as holding him during the weeks following his return from Abbeville is characteristic: "This last fortnight entirely taken up with Committees, and considering what to do in the winter among my old stores." He turned now to "history of the 16th century" and then to "mosses."<sup>4</sup> Botany seemed for a time to be winning in the race for Ruskin's immediate

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Ruskin to Norton*, vol. i. p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, edited by Francis Darwin, vol. i. pp. 125-126.

<sup>3</sup> *Queen of the Air*, § 62 n.

<sup>4</sup> See the account of a conversation with Miss Roberts given in Chap. V. (p. 79). It may be noted also that the first chapter of *Proserpina* is dated November 3, 1868.



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attention, but in the end he set himself down to Greek mythology, and wrote a lecture on "Greek Myths of Storm"; though, to be sure, when he printed the lecture in a book—*The Queen of the Air*—a good deal of botany managed to find a place. First, however, he had another task on hand—the preparation of a lecture on Abbeville for the Royal Institution. "Much teased," he writes in the diary (January 12), "with too much to get into Abbeville lecture." This was a form of teasing to which Ruskin always found himself subjected; his mind was so full, his thought so active and wide-ranging, that he ever saw the universal in the particular, and, at each turn of the road, found his subject branching off into innumerable directions. In the end, however, the Abbeville lecture got itself into consistent shape and manageable compass; though, indeed, he afterwards detached some thoughts on the relations of art and morality as more appropriate elsewhere than "in incidental connection with the porches of Abbeville."<sup>1</sup> This lecture, on *The Flamboyant Architecture of the Valley of the Somme*, delivered on Jan. 29, 1869, was first printed in the Library Edition of Ruskin's Works. It is one of the most charming, as also one of the most closely knit, of his occasional pieces. He took immense pains with this lecture, and put together an Exhibition, for which also he printed a Catalogue, of Fifty Paintings and Sketches to illustrate it.

## VII

The next three months were devoted to *The Queen of the Air*, the lectures on which the book is founded having been delivered at University College, London, on March 9 and 15. In this book Ruskin took up the studies in Greek mythology which had already begun to fascinate him when he was writing the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*. His study of the Greek myths of Athena is among the most characteristic of Ruskin's books, and contains some of his most poignant passages—passages which,

<sup>1</sup> See *Queen of the Air*, § 101.

as Carlyle said,<sup>1</sup> go into the heart like arrows. Also it abounds in flashes of insight. The book, says a friend of Ruskin's, who in another art has sometimes sought in these late days to touch the beautiful mythology of Greece, "is one of the most delightfully poetic treatises upon Greek myth as connected with cloud and storm ever penned. It would seem to have been inspired by Helios and Artemis, by Korë and Demeter; the pen with which he wrote it diffuses the many tints of Iris' bow into far-reaching words, turning sensitive visions into realities, and burning thoughts into visible flames."<sup>2</sup> In considering *The Queen of the Air* as a contribution to the study of Greek mythology, the reader should remember the date at which it was written. The views of the philological school, headed by Max Müller, were then in the ascendant. "Comparative Mythology," as the philological school understood the term, consisted of a comparison of the roots of words; mythology was "a disease of language," and the common origin of all the myths was to be found in natural, and especially in solar, phenomena. This is the doctrine to which, by implication, Ruskin assented. Another school has, since Ruskin wrote, won more acceptance. It pursues the methods of Comparative Anthropology, studies the beliefs and legends of contemporary or recent savagedom, and finds the origin of Greek (as of other) myths in the corresponding fancies of savage ancestors, from whom the Greeks of the civilised age inherited ideas no worthier, or in any essential respect other, than those of Bushmen and Red Indians. If one accepts this later view, many corrections and reservations, and some refutations, would become necessary in reading Ruskin's book; but Ruskin did not profess to be discussing the origins of myths. To discover the origin of any phase of life is not the same thing as to explain that phase. It makes very little contribution to the study of Shakespeare to announce that the Elizabethan drama was developed from morality and miracle plays; the beating of the savage tom-tom throws little

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 165.

Sir W. B. Richmond, K.C.B., R.A.,

<sup>2</sup> "Ruskin as I knew Him," by in *St. George*, October 1902.

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light on the symphonies of Beethoven; nor can Raphael be interpreted by the scratched lines of a reindeer on the rock. What Ruskin was occupied with is the meaning of myths, as they had been refined by the poets and the philosophers, or as they were believed, not by the savage ancestors of the Greeks, but by the Greeks for whom Homer and Pindar wrote. "The great question in reading a story is always," he says, "not what wild hunter dreamed, or what childish race first dreaded it; but what wise man first perfectly told, and what strong people first perfectly lived by it." Ruskin claimed, and not without reason, that his long study of the clouds and fields and rocks gave him an opportunity of entering sympathetically into the interpretation of nature-myths and nature-poets. Mythology is like romance; it is an expression of wonder. In some ways no one was better able than Ruskin, in whom the eyes of wonder were never closed, to enter into visionary thoughts. On the other hand, the ingenuity of his mind, which so often worked (to use a phrase of his own) "like a Virgilian simile, many thoughts in one,"<sup>1</sup> may not always have been a sound interpreter of less fanciful writers, or have served to keep him from pushing a favourite idea too far. He speaks elsewhere of the visions of the poets expressing themselves "tremulously, as far-off lights of heaven through terrestrial air";<sup>2</sup> he himself had peculiarly the gift of catching such lights, and making them flash forth their many-coloured message. Often, no doubt, the message may be his, rather than theirs; but it is the privilege of any noble art or literature to have many meanings for many minds, and Ruskin's *Queen of the Air* will, to sympathetic readers, often make a passage in the old poems, or some type in the old art, yet more "beautiful with haunting thought." And so the reader is not unlikely to be of the same opinion with Carlyle, whose letter to Ruskin about the book was as follows:—

"CHELSEA, August 17, 1869. . . . What I wish now is to know if you are at home, and to see you instantly, if so. *Instantly!*

<sup>1</sup> *Love's Meinie*, § 44.

<sup>2</sup> *The Relation of National Ethics to National Arts*, § 14.

For I am not unlikely to be off in a few days (by *Steamer* some whither) and again miss you. Come, I beg, *quam primum*! Last week I got your *Queen of the Air* and read it. Euge! Euge! No such Book have I met with for long years past. The one soul now in the world who seems to feel as I do on the highest matters, and speaks *mir aus dem Herzen* exactly what I wanted to hear! As to the natural history of those old Myths, I remained here and there a little uncertain, but as to the meanings you put into them, never anywhere. All these things I not only 'agree' with, but would use Thor's Hammer, if I had it, to enforce and put in action on this rotten world. Well done, well done! and pluck up a heart, and continue again and again. And don't say 'most great thoughts are dressed *in shrouds*':<sup>1</sup> many, many are the Phœbus Apollo celestial arrows you still have to shoot into the foul Pythons and poisonous abominable Megatheriums and Plesiosaurians that go staggering about, large as cathedrals, in our sunk Epoch again."

*The Queen of the Air* was a favourite book with its author. "It is the best I ever wrote," he said to Miss Beever—"the last which I took thorough loving pains with, and the first which I did with full knowledge of sorrow."

## VIII

Having finished the last page of his book, Ruskin left home for change and rest in Switzerland and Italy. On this occasion he was away for four months. As in the previous year he had gone to Abbeville to revise his impressions of the French architecture which he had studied for *The Seven Lamps*, so now he revisited another of his favourite haunts—Verona—and there, and at Venice, he reconsidered the conclusions he had formed in *The Stones of Venice*. In the main he found nothing to retract. "I am very glad to find," he wrote to his mother from Venice (August 7), "that after seventeen years I can certify the truth of every word of *The Stones of Venice* as far as regards art." One new discovery, however, he made among the Venetian pictures. "This Carpaccio," he wrote to

<sup>1</sup> See *Queen of the Air*, § 17.



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Burne-Jones (May 13), "is a new world to me." In the sphere of architecture and history he found that his main conclusions had been right, but the studies of the intervening years now suggested many qualifications, connexions, and reserves which occurred to him. "I think my work on Verona," he writes to his mother (June 21), "though much shorter, will be a far better one than on Venice." Ultimately the work took no more elaborate form than a lecture on Verona which he delivered on his return home; but meanwhile he worked indefatigably. Drawings in the Ruskin Art Collection at Oxford show how much work he did with the pencil and the brush. He had his assistant, J. W. Bunney, with him, to help in making memorials of buildings or frescoes doomed to destruction. His favourite Castelbarco Tomb at S. Anastasia—"chief among all the sepulchral marbles of a land of mourning"<sup>1</sup>—was "restored" before his eyes, and he bought "one of the stones of the roof of my dear old red tomb"; it has "part of its new white cap on," he writes (July 23), "and looks like a Venetian gentleman in a Pantaloon's mask." Two days later he "got at the stonemason who long ago restored the broken pieces of the tomb of Can Signorio, and got from him one of the original little shafts of the niches. It is in a splendid, largely crystalline white marble (I think Greek, not Italian), and is a perfect example of the chiselling at Verona in the fourteenth century. It is only about a yard high, and I shall carry it home myself like a barometer, wrapt in paper." Other letters to his mother describe how his days at Verona and Venice were spent:—

"VERONA, *June 7*.—I enjoy my *mornings* here immensely. I get up at quarter to five and dress quietly, looking out at the morning light on the tomb of the Count Castelbarco (my favourite old red one); then at quarter to six I go to the café at the corner of the square and sip my cup of coffee, looking at the lovely old porch of St. Anastasia; then by six o'clock I am at my work, as I used to be in 1845, which it is great pleasure to me to find still possible. Then I come in to breakfast at half-past eight and read

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<sup>1</sup> *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. ch. xi.

a little—then draw again till eleven, when I come in to write my letters—then I rest till three—then get a couple of hours more work—and then my walk before dinner. I dine at eight, just now—for else I should lose the sunset (but seven is better)—and get to bed at ten. But there's so much to do ! ”

“ VERONA, *June 10.*—If I remember rightly, you used to take some interest in Mr. Bunney. You may like to know he is doing most lovely work for me—coloured drawings of the buildings, large—while I myself draw the detail, requiring (though I say it) my advanced judgment to render accurately. Alas! the judgment is still far before the manual power. I was quarter of an hour yesterday vainly trying to draw a fold of Can Grande's mantle. But I do better than any one else would. For no one else would even try.”

“ VERONA, *June.*—As I was drawing in the square this morning in a lovely, quiet, Italian light, there came up the poet Longfellow with his little daughter, a girl of twelve or thirteen, with *springy*-curled flaxen hair—curls, or waves, that wouldn't come out in damp, I mean. They stayed talking beside me some time. I don't think it was a very vain thought that came over me, that if a photograph could have been taken of the beautiful square of Verona, in that soft light, with Longfellow and his daughter talking to me at my work, some people both in England and America would have liked copies of it.”

“ VENICE, *July 1.*—The painter, Holman Hunt, is here, and yesterday I showed him the Scuola di San Rocco, and I thought again if there could have been got two photographs—one of the piazza at Verona, with Longfellow and me, and another of Tintoret's Annunciation, with Holman Hunt and me examining it—both of them would find some sale with the British public.”

Mr. Holman Hunt has given a full account in his Autobiography of this meeting with Ruskin.<sup>1</sup> They had not met for some years, for Mr. Hunt, as a friend of Millais, had thought it better to hold aloof, but now the friendliest

<sup>1</sup> *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, vol. ii. pp. 258–271. For some explanations necessary in partial correction of

Mr. Hunt's recollections, see my notes in the Library Edition, vol. xxxiv. pp. 661–663.

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relations were at once resumed. In the Scuola di San Rocco, Mr. Hunt noticed that Ruskin seemed now interested more in Tintoret's composition and technique than in the imaginative symbolism which he had interpreted in his early books. But *Modern Painters* was produced, and in front of the "Crucifixion" Ruskin read his famous description. "The words brought back to my mind," says Mr. Hunt, "the little bedroom, twenty-two years since, wherein I sat till the early morning reading the same passage with marvel.<sup>1</sup> . . . How many, I thought, would envy me as I listened to his precise and emphatic reading of the ever memorable passage."

On this tour, however, Ruskin was perpetually haunted, as always in his later period, by the contrast between the beauties of nature and of art and the misery of the human beings in the midst of them. He dare not be happy, with so much pain around him; he cannot be miserable, with so much beauty to enjoy and to interpret:—

(*To his Mother.*) "VERONA, June 17.—The weather is quite cool and pleasant, and the after-dinner drives are entirely delightful. Yesterday I was up the hills far above the town, looking down on Verona on one side, and over the great plain as far as Padua on the other, with the Alps to the north; and the hill all over sweet wild grass at the top, with the skylarks singing, as if there were really no harm in the world at all. All these things do not make me happy—nothing will ever do that: and I should be ashamed if anything could, while the earth is so full of misery. But they are very good and comforting to me, and help me to do my work better."

But he was no idle sentimentalist. He was ever seeking for some practical expression for his feelings. At Verona, and as he passed through Switzerland on his way home, his mind was full of plans for the prevention of the inundations, the cause of so much suffering and disease:—

(*To his Mother.*) "VERONA, May 22, June 2.—I know that the thing can be done, and all these great monstrous dragons of rivers

harnessed, and made fruitful and serviceable in all their waves. . . . CHAP.  
 I see more and more clearly every day my power of showing how IX.  
 the Alpine torrents may be—not subdued—but ‘educated.’ A  
 torrent is just like a human creature—left to gain full strength in  
 wantonness and rage, no power can any more redeem it; but  
 watch the channels of every early impulse and fence them, and your  
 torrent becomes the gentlest and most blessed of servants.”

(To MRS. JOHN SIMON.) “28th May.—I was very glad of your  
 note, though very angry with you for thinking I didn’t know what  
 could or couldn’t be done for the Alps. It is not to arrest *their*  
 fall. It is to arrest the Rainfall on their sides that I mean to work.  
 I will take a single hillside; and so trench it that I can catch the  
 rainfall of three average years at once, if it came down in an hour  
 (that’s exaggeration, for the rush would carry all before it). But  
 I will so trench it (as I say) that I can catch any rainfall without  
 letting a drop go to the valley. It shall all go into reservoirs, and  
 thence be taken where, and when, it is wanted. When I have  
 done this for one hillside, if other people don’t do it for other hill-  
 sides, and make the last valleys of the Alps one Paradise of safe  
 plenty, it is their fault—not mine. But, if I die, I will die digging  
 like Faust.”

He interviewed engineers and capitalists, and preached to  
 them his gospel of educating the streams. If men would  
 only catch the waste water where it fell, and keep it till they  
 wanted it, instead of letting it run down into the valleys,  
 the arid Alps would be “one garden,” and the inundations  
 of the Ticino and the Adige need never recur. “Every  
 field its pond, every ravine its reservoir” was his principle.  
 Ruskin was never to carry out any of these schemes, and  
 Mrs. Simon was not the only one of his friends, I daresay,  
 who smiled at the confident enthusiasm with which he  
 announed his resolve to curb the Alpine torrents and  
 redeem the deltas of the Lombard plain. The author of  
*Modern Painters* was not destined to be a second Leonardo  
 da Vinci. He smiled a little at himself in later years when,  
 in showing to a visitor some tiny experiments on the fell-  
 side above Brantwood, he said that civil engineering was  
 his true bent and that his devotion to literature and art



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had been all a mistake, and that England had lost in him a second Telford.<sup>1</sup> At the little village of Fulking, in Sussex, in which neighbourhood Ruskin sometimes stayed with friends, there was difficulty in obtaining an adequate supply of drinking-water. He devised a scheme, and it was carried out. Beside the well which now supplies their wants, a marble tablet has been erected "To the glory of God, and in honour of John Ruskin. 'That they might set their hope in God, and not forget to keep his commandments who brought streams also out of the rock.'" This was not bridling the Ticino or the Po, but Ruskin's large schemes were very earnest at the time; they fell into place in his mind with other thoughts; they were part of a general conception for redeeming the world. A fatal obstacle to the timely prevention of floods was absence of the spirit of co-operation. Here, as in all things, anarchy was the law of death. The redemption of Alpine valleys from malaria was a condition of preserving a happy peasant-life. The world itself might be redeemed by helpfulness and organised co-operation. Ruskin may have lacked the practical gift; but he was possessed by the vision:—

(*To his Mother.*) "VERONA, June 18.—Yesterday, it being quite cool, I went for a walk, and as I came down from a rather quiet hillside a mile or two out of town, I passed a house where the women were at work spinning the silk off the cocoons. There was a sort of whirring sound as in an English mill; but at intervals they sang a long sweet chant, all together, lasting about two minutes, then pausing a minute and then beginning again. It was good and tender music, and the multitude of voices prevented any sense of failure, so that it was all very lovely and sweet, and like the things that I mean to try to bring to pass."

When he returned home he laid his various schemes before Carlyle. In a letter to Froude in the autumn of 1869, Carlyle wrote: "One day, by express desire on both sides, I had Ruskin for some hours, really interesting and entertaining.

<sup>1</sup> "Some Reminiscences of Ruskin," by Egbert Rydings, in *The Young Man*, July 1895.

He is full of projects, of generous prospective activities, some of which I opined to him would prove chimerical. There is, in singular environment, a ray of real Heaven in R. Passages of that last book *Queen of the Air* went into my heart like arrows.”<sup>1</sup> And to Ruskin himself (October 1): “Don’t neglect to call on me the first time you are in town—the sight of your face will be a comfort, and I long for a little further talk on the problems you are occupied with.”

## IX

Ruskin’s projects as expounded to Carlyle, and many other plans, were, however, to be interrupted by a call to fresh work which he received towards the close of his sojourn in Italy in 1869:—

(*To his Mother.*) “HOSPENTHAL, 15th August 1869.—Here, in the old Inn you know so well, under the grassy hill you used to be so happy climbing in the morning, I get a letter from my cousin George telling me I am the first professor of art appointed at the English Universities. Which will give me as much power as I can well use, and would have given pleasure to my poor father, and therefore to me—once—and perhaps may yet give some pleasure to—some one who has given me my worst pain. I hope—quietly and patiently, to be of very wide use in this position. I am *but just* ripe for it.”

He was already on his way home when he heard of the appointment. He would gladly have stayed longer in Italy, but his mother was yearning for his return. After crossing the St. Gothard, he spent a day at Thun with Professor Norton, and went to see “Marie of the Giessbach,” who was dying of consumption:—

(*To his Mother.*) “GIESSBACH, August 26. . . . Marie has just brought me a nice little basket to gather some wild strawberries in, for my dessert. Poor Marie will never gather any more, unless they grow in heaven, which I very much hope they do if I am to live there. Cima da Conegliano always puts them in the grass

CHAP. near his Saints. . . . I have a little too many irons in the fire, as  
IX. you say."

"Too many irons in the fire." That had been Ruskin's case for many years past, and was to be so, in increasing measure, for many years to come. He saw already how great would be the demands of his Oxford duties, as he chose to interpret them, and was anxious to save some of his old accumulations from the impending maelstrom. "I shall give a good two months to my botany," he wrote to his mother (August 19), "when I come home,—first, for fear it gets 'off the boil.'" He returned from the Continent at the end of August 1869; his Inaugural Lectures at Oxford began on February 8, 1870. The five intervening months were spent at Denmark Hill in increasing work, with occasional visits to Oxford:—

(To C. E. NORTON.) "17th November. . . . This is what I am doing:—

"1. I write every day, if possible, a little of my botany;—as much of it as is done by my birthday I shall then collect and print, promising, if I keep well, to go on next year. It is to be called *Cora Nivalis*, 'Snowy Proserpine': an introduction for young people to the study of Alpine and Arctic wild flowers.

"2. I am translating or transferring 'Chaucer's Dream' into intelligible and simple English, and am going to print it with the original, and a note on every difficult or pretty word, for the first of my series of standard literature for young people. I hope to get it out also about my birthday.

"3. I am translating the *Cent Ballades* into the same kind of English (our own present simplest), and am going very soon to write to the publishers for leave to edit that for the second of my standard books. I have worked through 57 of the 100, but am much puzzled yet here and there.

"4. I am correcting *Sesame and Lilies* for a new edition, adding the Dublin lecture, and a final, practical piece of very plain directions to those young ladies who will mind what I say. Q. How many?

"5. I am preparing a series of drawings of natural history,

and from the old masters, for use in the schools of Oxford. I have done a prawn's rostrum and the ivy on a wall of Mantegna's.

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"6. I am writing this following series of lectures for Oxford in the spring. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"7. I am writing two papers on agates, and superintending the plates for the *Geological Magazine* in December and January.

"8. I have been giving — lessons in French and drawing, and am giving — lessons in Italian and directing her as a vowed sister of our society with one or two more.

"9. I am learning how to play musical scales quite rightly, and have a real Music-master twice a week, and practise always half an hour a day.

"10. I am reading Marmontel's *Memoirs* to my mother. . . .

"Now, I hope you'll get this letter, for you see I haven't much time left for letters. Love to you all."

Some of these designs were afterwards carried out; others were not. And there were other pieces of work not mentioned in the letter to Norton. One was the lecture at Woolwich on "The Future of England," which was included in later editions of *The Crown of Wild Olive*:—

(To MISS JOAN AGNEW.) "DENMARK HILL, 27th Nov. . . . I'm going to give my Woolwich lecture this way. I shall say that I'm tired of finding fault, even if I had any right to do so; that henceforward, I'm only going to say what *ought* to be done—not what ought *not* to be done. That there are two great parties in the state—the Radical and Conservative—that I have thought over their respective wishes, and that they have two opposite watchwords, which are both right—and only right *together*—namely:—Radical, 'Every man his chance.' Tory, 'Every man in his rank.' I shall ask leave of my audience to make myself a Thorough Radical for the first half-hour, and to change into a Thorough Tory in the second."

Another piece of work was a lecture at the Royal Institution on February 4, 1870, entitled "Verona and its Rivers." Into this Ruskin packed close the thoughts and observations made during the summer of 1869, and even so the material

<sup>1</sup> A conspectus of the *Lectures on Art* (1870).



CHAP. IX. overflowed, as in the case of Abbeville, into an Exhibition of Examples, with a printed catalogue.

## X

On entering upon a new period in his life, Ruskin made a retrospect of the years that were passed;—

(To MRS. JOHN SIMON.) “DENMARK HILL. *Christmas Day*, 1869. . . . I did not answer a bit of your former letter, about what the last ten years of my life might have been. It is one of the strangest and greatest difficulties of my present life, that in looking back to the past, every evil has been caused by an almost exactly equal balance of the faults of others and of my own. I am never punished for my own faults or follies but through the faults or follies of others. Nevertheless, it will be justest in you to blame either Fate or me myself, for all that I suffer, and no other person. My father—my mother—and R. have all done me much harm. They have all done me greater good. And they all three did the best for me they knew how to do. Would you have me, because my father prevented me from saving Turner’s work—and because my mother made me effeminate and vain—and because R. has caused the strongest days of my life to pass in (perhaps not unserviceable) pain—abandon the three memories and loves? Or only the most innocent of the three?

“I am in a great strait about it now—whether to think of these ten years as Divine or Diabolical. Whether to live still in the weak, purifying pain—or to harden myself into daily common service. I *must* do the last for some time. But think of it for me.”

Ruskin threw himself into daily common service with full fire and energy; but his new life at Oxford was lived above an undercurrent of pain. There was the inspiration of Duty; the purifying, perhaps, but not the reward and encouragement, of Love. The estrangement from Miss La Touche, to which I must refer in a later chapter, was now complete. During the weeks in which he was writing his Oxford lectures, I find this entry:—

“Last Friday about 12 o’clock at noon my mistress passed me and would not speak.”

## CHAPTER X

### OXFORD PROFESSOR

“Multo magis, ut vulgo dicitur, viva vox adficit. Nam licet acriora sint quæ legas, altius tamen in animo sedent quæ pronuntiatio, vultus, habitus, gestus etiam dicentis adfigit.”  
—PLINY (*Letters*, ii. 3).

RUSKIN'S first Professorship (1870-78)<sup>1</sup> was perhaps the busiest period even in his busy life. In addition to his work at Oxford, he published at various intervals portions of works on Botany, on Geology, and on Drawing. He started a library of standard literature. He founded a Museum at Sheffield. He engaged in several social experiments; the better sweeping of the streets in St. Giles's and the sale of tea at a fair price were not too trivial for his efforts, nor was the reformation of England, through a Companionship of St. George, too large. He wrote incessantly to the newspapers on topics of the day; and all the while he poured forth, at monthly intervals, that strange and passionate medley of information, controversy, homily, reminiscence, and prophecy which he entitled *Fors Clavigera*. These tasks were undertaken, not one thing at a time, but often all at the same time. “Head too full,” he wrote in his diary (February 12, 1872), “and don't know which to write first.” He solved the problem by writing something of everything every month, or even every day. He describes in *Fors* how at a particular moment he had seven large books going through the press at the same time.<sup>2</sup> “There is no use,” he wrote in his diary (January 29, 1872), “saying tired and ill; always now.” No use; and no wonder. The intense strain upon his

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin was elected in 1869, and re-elected in 1873 and 1876. At the end of 1878 he resigned. In 1883 he was again elected. It is convenient to speak of the earlier period (1870-78) as that of his “first Professorship.”  
<sup>2</sup> Letter 59 (October 1875).

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emotions, the unsparing drafts upon his physical and mental resources, were doomed to pay the penalty; and the period of his life now under review comes to an end with a serious illness, followed by the resignation of his Professorship. It will be apparent that a strictly chronological arrangement of the events of this period would be inconvenient and confusing. In this chapter I shall give a general account of Ruskin's work and influence as Oxford Professor. The following seven chapters will tell the story of his life and of the books which he wrote as Professor during the years 1870-77; and in five further chapters his activities outside the study and the University during the same period will be described.

## I

The desirability of establishing a Chair of Fine Art in the old Universities had been mooted as long ago as in 1844. In noticing a pamphlet on the subject, issued in that year, Ruskin had spoken of the difficulties of filling a post which now, twenty-five years later, he was himself called upon to create:—

(*To H. G. LIDDELL.*) “1844. . . . Greswell's paper is very valuable and interesting, and I wish it had been a little expanded and generally circulated—more especially that he had dwelt more distinctly on the relations of Art to Religion; as, under that point of view, I conceive he might have brought his measures forward not merely as expedient or desirable, but even as a matter of duty in no light degree incumbent on the members of the University. There appears to be but one obstacle in your way: you may get your pictures, your gallery, your authority, and your thirty thousand pounds—but what will you do for a *Professor*? Where can you lay finger on the man who has at once the artistical power to direct your taste in matters technical, and the high feeling and scholarship necessary to show the end of the whole matter?”

In 1868 Mr. Felix Slade, a wealthy Proctor in Doctors Commons and a great virtuoso and collector, had bequeathed a sum of £35,000 for the endowment of Professorships in

Fine Art in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and in University College, London. The “Graduate of Oxford,” “Author of *Modern Painters*,” was obviously marked out for the Professorship in that University; and, though other names were tentatively mentioned, Ruskin was unanimously appointed. His friends, Liddell and Acland, were among the electors:—

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(To H. W. ACLAND.) “GIESSBACH, 19th August, 1869.—Your letter has given me very deep pleasure. I cannot answer to-day, but it is very touching to me to see what strength of feeling you have for me. I am thankful also to hear of the Dean’s having wished this, and wrought for it. I hope both he and you will find that you have been more right than it is possible you should yet think in giving me this position. The last ten years have ripened what there was in me of serviceableness, and chastised much of my hasty stubborn and other foolish, or worse, faults—more than all that had happened to me in former life—and though much has been killed and much spoiled of me, what is left is, I believe, just what (if any of me) will be useful at Oxford. I believe you will both be greatly surprised for one thing at the caution with which I shall avoid saying anything with the University authority which may be either questionable by, or offensive to, even persons who know little of my subject, and at the generally quiet tone to which I shall reduce myself in all public duty. You may, on the other hand, both be disappointed—partly by actual want of energy in me, partly by my carelessness about immediate results. But on the whole, I believe I shall put as much fire into the work as any one else, and what there is, will be without smoke, or nearly so.”

Ruskin’s expressions of thanks were no empty formula. He felt his appointment to be a great compliment and a great trust. “Whatever happens now,” he said to his mother (February 8, 1870) after his Inaugural Lecture, “I *have* been permitted by the ordaining Power to begin in Oxford the study of my own art, for others.” Henceforth, Ruskin became to his friends “The Professor.”

Four views may be held of the Professorial office. A Professor at Oxford or Cambridge may be appointed by way



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of ornament, or for the purpose of research, or in order to give general instruction, or, lastly, with a view to professional teaching. Ruskin's tenure of the Slade Professorship illustrated each and all of these different, but not necessarily conflicting, functions. The fire which he promised in his letter to Acland was, so long as his health permitted, unflagging. He taught; he founded and endowed a Drawing Mastership; he formed, presented, and catalogued collections to illustrate his subject. He published six volumes of lectures.<sup>1</sup> Interpreting his duties in a liberal sense, he considered further that "the real duty involved in my Oxford Professorship cannot be completely done by giving lectures in Oxford only, but that I ought also to give what guidance I may to travellers in Italy."<sup>2</sup> In the execution of this self-imposed duty, he published three Italian Guides—*Mornings in Florence*, *St. Mark's Rest*, and a *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice*. His Oxford lectures, though neglected by many of his critics, who are apt to judge Ruskin by isolated sentences from his earliest writings, contain much of his matured thought on many artistic subjects, of his most careful research, and of his most ingenious and penetrating analysis. Upon the composition of his more formal lectures he spent infinite pains. "I believe," he wrote, in a note to *Ariadne Florentina*, "that I am taking too much trouble in writing these lectures. This sentence has cost me, I suppose, first and last, about as many hours as there are lines in it." And in conversation with a friend he said at a later date: "I have taken more pains with the Oxford Lectures than with anything else I have ever done, and I must say that I am immensely disappointed at their not being more constantly quoted and read."<sup>3</sup>

The part that Ruskin played in the general education of

<sup>1</sup> Namely, *Lectures on Art*, *Aratra Pentelici*, *The Eagle's Nest*, *Ariadne Florentina*, *Love's Meinie*, and *Val d'Arno*. A single lecture, on *The Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret*, was also published as a pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Mornings in Florence*.

<sup>3</sup> "A Conversation with Mr. Ruskin": *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 21, 1884. The conversation was with Mr. M. H. Spielmann.

the University by means of lectures and personal influence was also considerable. There are some Professors who, admirable though their research work may be, might yet as well be living in the moon for any vital influence which they exercise upon the studies or students of the University. The educational theory of professorships is by some persons dismissed as an obsolete survival from mediæval times; and Carlyle said that "the true University in these days is a Collection of Books." There is an element of truth in this point of view; but however wide may be the dispersion of books, there will always remain a place in the educational system for the Living Voice and the Living Teacher. Delightful as Ruskin's Oxford Lectures are to read, yet as the Dean of Durham truly says, "no one can appreciate their effect, unless he was so fortunate as to hear them. One saw the same strange *afflatus* coming and going in his eye, his gestures, his voice."<sup>1</sup> "Many members of the University," says the Master of the Temple, "date from that period their first awakening to a sense of the beauty of Italian Art, and it may be doubted whether the interest of the University in painting and sculpture has ever again been so keen or so widely spread as it was then."<sup>2</sup> In arresting and stimulating attention, some of the less formal lectures were even more effective than those which Ruskin printed as books. The figure of the lecturer was striking, with ample gown—discarded often when its folds became too hopelessly involved—and the velvet college cap, one of the few remaining memorials of the "gentleman commoner." The quaintness of his costume—the light home-spun tweed, the double-breasted waistcoat, the ill-fitting and old-fashioned frock-coat, the amplitude of inevitable blue tie<sup>3</sup>—accurately

<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin in Oxford and other Studies*, by G. W. Kitchin, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> A contribution by the Rev. H. G. Woods, D.D., to the Rev. H. L. Thompson's *Memoir of Dean Liddell*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> The following is an item from "Affairs of the Master," as given in *Fors*, 1876: "July 16. Geoghe-

gan (blue neckties) . . . £4 0 0." The blue ties offended Matthew Arnold. "Ruskin was there," he wrote in a letter describing a London dinner party (December 1877), "looking very slight and spiritual. I am getting to like him. He gains much by evening dress, plain black and white,

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reflected something of the quaintness of his mind and talk. If it were not for the peculiarly delicate hands and tapering fingers, denoting the artistic temperament, the Oxford Professor might have been taken for an old-fashioned country gentleman. In repose his face was at this time furrowed into sadness; but the blue eyes, piercing from beneath thick, bushy eyebrows, never ceased to shine with the fire of genius; whilst the smile that was seldom absent for long when he lectured, lit up his face with the radiance of a singularly gracious and gentle spirit. His voice, though not very strong, had a peculiar *timbre*, which was at once penetrating and attractive. His old-fashioned pronunciation, with the peculiar roll of the r's, seemed in perfect harmony with the mediæval strain in his thought. "I have heard him lecture several times," says Mr. Mallock in his description of Ruskin as "Mr. Herbert" in *The New Republic*, "and that singular voice of his, which would often hold all the theatre breathless, haunts me still, sometimes. There was something strange and aerial in its exquisite modulations that seemed as if it came from a disconsolate spirit, hovering over the waters of Babylon and remembering Zion."<sup>1</sup> He read magnificently. The quotations from Homer or from Chaucer or from some other favourite author were declaimed as no other public man of the time, except Gladstone, could have declaimed them. Passages, too, from his own earlier books came with new force and meaning when recited with the appropriate emphasis and intonation. But though Ruskin seldom, if ever, trusted a discourse entirely to improvisation, he also seldom adhered exclusively to the written text. From time to time some key was struck which took his attention, and then came an

and by his fancy being forbidden to range through the world of coloured cravats" (*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. ii. p. 141). In fact Ruskin's fancy never strayed from true blue.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Republic*, ed. 1879, pp. 16, 17. The portrait of Mr. Herbert is perhaps the only one

in the collection which is not a decided caricature; and "he is almost the only man in these days," we are told, "for whom I feel a real reverence—almost the only one of our teachers who seems to me to speak with the least breath of inspiration."



outburst of spontaneous rhetoric. An American writer, who spent a winter at Oxford as an unattached student, was bidden by the Censor "not to neglect your opportunity to hear the most eloquent man in England." He went to one of Ruskin's lectures, and thus reported what he heard:—

"To illustrate the honesty of mediæval art in contrast with modern sham, he pointed out an arabesque from a MS. of the Psalms, copied with coarse inaccuracy for a tailpiece in a current magazine. He made us see how the graceful lines were distorted, and the whole perfect design cheapened and falsified. 'And that's what you like, you English!' he railed, as he flung the offending magazine on the floor. Then taking up his manuscript Psalter he opened to the first psalm, and began to read it, giving both the majestic Vulgate Latin that was before him, and the English he knew so well. In a moment his spirit was rapt into an ecstasy. Striding back and forth behind his platform rail, he poured out a rhapsody of exalted thought in rhythmic phrase which no one could have attempted to transcribe, but which must have overwhelmed all who heard it with the thrilling consciousness of being in the immediate presence, and listening to the spontaneous exercise of creative genius."<sup>1</sup>

It used to be said of Savonarola, says Mr. Image, who now (1911) fills Professor Ruskin's chair, "that when he preached his physical presence seemed actually to be enlarged. I would say the same thing about Ruskin. Always beginning in a low voice, slowly and quietly, he grew more and more full of sparkle and vigour as he proceeded. But he never lost command of himself, or became the plaything of his eloquence. Those perorations, those incomparable perorations, were delivered very gravely, with the most exquisite sense of cadence, of rhythmical modulation. Everybody, of course, looked forward to them. Ruskin knew that quite well himself. I remember an amusing instance of it. Drawing himself up and looking straight at his audience, his face half reproachful, half agleam with

<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin as an Oxford Lecturer," by James Manning Bruce, in the *Century Magazine*, February 1898.



CHAP. malicious fun—"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "there is to  
X. be no peroration to-day. I know you think I take immense pains with these endings. I do take immense pains with them. But they are not what I want you to come and listen to me for. So to-day we will have none." And he abruptly stopped."<sup>1</sup> "I well remember," says another listener, "how in the last course he so overwhelmed us with solemn awe, that when he closed his book no one moved or spoke. We sat there absolutely silent. We no more thought of the usual thunder of applause than we should have thought of clapping an angel's song that makes the heavens be mute."<sup>2</sup>

Another feature of the lectures which gave special interest to the Spoken, as distinct from the Printed Word, was their illustration by means of drawings, diagrams, and pictures. The eye was at every turn called in to confirm the lecturer's appeal to the imagination or the reason. The large table in the theatre and the wall behind were generally covered with drawings and pictures; most of these would be referred to in the course of the lecture, whilst at the end there would be a rush to the front, and the Professor would hold an informal class, for further explanation and criticism of the pictures to such students as cared to stay. The ingenuity expended in the preparation of occasional illustrations gave additional piquancy to the lectures. The plate in *Aratra Pentelici* of a Greek Apollo set beside the British self-made man of Charles Keene illustrates the kind of whimsical effect at which Ruskin sometimes aimed. Often amongst the pictures placed behind the lecturer there would be one with its face turned to the wall, or two or three would be brought in at the last moment, carefully covered up, by Ruskin's servant. Great was the amusement on one occasion when a hidden treasure was disclosed in the shape of a sketch from Tintoret's "Paradise," which the Professor—by chance or design—held out with the wrong side up. "Ah, well," he said, joining in the general laughter, "what does it matter? for in Tintoret's 'Paradise' you have

<sup>1</sup> "Some Personal Recollections of John Ruskin," in *St. George*, vol. vi,

<sup>2</sup> Mr. H. W. Nevinson, in the *Daily Chronicle*, Feb. 8, 1899.

heaven all round you." I recall another effective piece of what may be called the lecturer's stage-play. Ruskin was expatiating, as was his wont, on the vandalism of the modern world. On an easel beside him was a water-colour drawing of Leicester by Turner. "The old stone bridge is picturesque," he said, "isn't it? But of course you want something more 'imposing' nowadays. So you shall have it." And taking his paint-box and brush he rapidly sketched in on the glass what is known in modern specifications as a "handsome iron structure." "Then," he continued, "you will want, of course, some tall factory chimneys, and I will give them to you galore." Which he proceeded to do in like fashion. "The blue sky of heaven was pretty, but you cannot have everything, you know." And he painted clouds of black smoke over Turner's sky. "Your 'improvements,' " he went on, "are marvellous 'triumphs of modern industry,' I know; but somehow they do not seem to produce nobler men and women, and no modern town is complete, you will admit, without a gaol and a lunatic asylum to crown it. So here they are for you." By which time not an inch of the Turner drawing was left visible under the "improvements" painted upon the glass. "But for my part," said Ruskin, taking his sponge, and with one pass of the hand wiping away those modern improvements against which he had inveighed in so many printed volumes—"for my part, I prefer the old."

Such reminiscences will, perhaps, serve to explain the vivid impression which Ruskin's lectures made on those who heard them. It was the unflagging vivacity of the lecturer—his complete absorption in the subject, the zest with which he admired or denounced, his transparent sincerity and his intensity of conviction—that made the Living Voice so potent. Nor was it only on younger and more impressionable minds that Ruskin's eloquence cast its spell. "Acland has come in to say," he writes to his mother after one of the earlier *Lectures on Art*, "that a very hard and stern man had been so much moved by my talk to-day that he could not speak for near an hour afterwards."<sup>1</sup> But the

<sup>1</sup> "February 1870" is the date; the day is not given.

CHAP. X. popularity and the topics of Ruskin's lectures by no means pleased everybody. "Imagine a theological Oxford being told that morality 'receives from religion neither law nor place; but only hope and felicity!' Imagine an Oxford in which Pusey was still almost the dominant power being told that the one effect of monastic institutions was 'that multitudes of kindly disposed, gentle, and submissive persons, who might else by their true patience have alloyed the hardness of the common crowd, and by their activity for good balanced its misdoing, are withdrawn from all such true services of man, that they may pass the best part of their lives in what they are told is the service of God—namely, desiring what they cannot obtain, lamenting what they cannot avoid, and reflecting on what they cannot understand.' No wonder that the Sanhedrin did not approve."<sup>1</sup> "My University friends came to me," said Ruskin, of his appeal to young Englishmen at the end of the Inaugural Lecture, "with grave faces, to remonstrate against irrelevant and Utopian topics of that nature being introduced in lectures on art."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Mallock pleasantly satirises such remonstrances in *The New Republic*. "What a dreadful blowing-up Mr. Herbert gave us," he makes Lady Ambrose say. "Now that, you know, I think is all very well in a sermon, but in a lecture, when the things are supposed to be taken more or less literally, I think it is a little out of place." To the lecturer himself "the irrelevant topics" were the very essence of what he had to say. He had promised Acland and Liddell to be on his good behaviour; but, as he wrote to Lady Mount-Temple at the same date (September 4, 1869), he was not going to Oxford to be only a drawing-master. He did, indeed, devote himself industriously to the narrower duties; but with him, the teaching of art was the teaching of everything. The Inaugural Oxford Lectures fill their organic place in the body of his work, growing out of the *Stones of Venice* and *Unto this Last*, and leading on, in their turn, to *Fors Clavigera*. He had taught in the first

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, April 20, 1906. The quotations are from *Lectures on Art* §§ 37, 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 42.

book "the dependence of all human work, or edifice, for its beauty, on the happy life of the workman." He laid down in the second book "the laws of that life itself, and its dependence on the Sun of Justice." He went to Oxford to preach the necessity that such life "should be led, and the gracious laws of beauty and labour recognised, by the upper, no less than the lower, classes of England; and, finally, "it is simply one part of the practical work I have to do in Art-teaching," he said in *Fors Clavigera*, "to bring somewhere [the conditions of fine art] into existence."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, in the exercise of his professorial duties, did not neglect research; but he was also a missionary. It was his business to claim for Art its full place among the Humanities: and where, more properly than from an Oxford Chair, could his protest have been made, on one side, against the commercial Philistinism of the outer world, and, on the other, against the over-specialism of merely intellectual studies which sometimes dominates the lecture-rooms of a University?

## II

Lectures and classes were not the only channels through which Ruskin exerted some humanising and stimulating influence in the University. He mixed at times in the social life of the place, and he came in personal touch with many of the younger men. During the first year of his Professorship he made his home with Acland, living with him as one of the family. He objected to being lionised, and shrunk from frequent dining out; though he was often to be met at the Deanery—and sometimes, too, at Jowett's table. Jowett, in later years, came to know and like Ruskin well. But at this period, we are told, "his attitude towards Ruskin was hesitating." He was "not insensible to the genius of his writings, or the noble devotion of his character," but "he was suspicious of æstheticism" and had no sympathy with Ruskin's economic ideas or schemes. At the end of "Mr. Herbert's" lecture in *The New Republic*, "after the fire,

<sup>1</sup> Letters 9 and 78.



CHAP. from one of the side boxes came a still small voice: ‘Very  
X. poor taste—very poor taste.’” The voice was “Dr. Jenkinson’s.” Ruskin’s enthusiastic manner, too, did not appeal to the Master. “Once after dinner, when Ruskin was seated in the drawing-room talking to a lady, Jowett, who stood with other friends in front, suddenly broke into a hearty ringing laugh. Ruskin sprang up and caught him by both hands: ‘Master, how delighted I am to hear you; I wish I could laugh like that!’ Upon which all the room laughed—except Jowett.”<sup>1</sup>

In daytime “the Professor” was often to be seen at the Bodleian—copying from illuminated MSS. shown him by his friend, H. O. Coxe, the librarian, or “studying Renaissance” with his “antagonisticest” pupil, Mrs. Mark Pattison.<sup>2</sup> But Ruskin felt that he ought to come into closer relation with the corporate life of the University, and after a year’s residence in Acland’s house, or at Abingdon, he went into College. How this came about has been told in a charming paper by Mr. J. W. Oddie, Fellow of Corpus:<sup>3</sup>—

“Early in 1870 Professor Ruskin visited Corpus. He came to see the illuminated manuscripts at the invitation of a pupil who happened to be a tutor of the College at that time. . . . While walking round the Fellows’ garden, ‘in that peaceful corner,’ as he said, ‘between the two towers of Christ Church and Merton,’ he suddenly asked his friend if he thought it would be possible for him to obtain rooms in Corpus. He felt that there only, nestled so close to, yet not in, the old ‘House’ of overpowering memories, could he live quite happily in Oxford. . . . Without hesitation the President and Fellows expressed their willingness to allot to Professor Ruskin rooms in the Fellows’ Buildings, and to elect him to an Honorary Fellowship.”

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. ii. p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Memoir prefixed to Lady Dilke’s *Book of the Spiritual Life*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> “Ruskin at Corpus,” in the

*Pelican Record*, June 1894. In the following number, there was a continuation of the story by another Fellow of the College, Mr. C. Plummer.

He was admitted on April 29, 1871, and at once took up his residence in the College; the rooms allotted being on the first floor, right, of No. 2 staircase, looking out on to the meadows. The ceremony of his admission as an Honorary Fellow was not unimpressive, continues Mr. Oddie, "and it certainly was amusing":—

"The good old President<sup>1</sup>—one of the kindest of beings—was a fine example of 'pre-scientific man,' to borrow a phrase applied to himself by the Vicegerent of another College about that time. To him Ruskin, in the plenitude of his genius and culture, made a dutiful little address, taking upon himself vows of almost monastic character, especially in the reverence and obedience which he promised to the head of his second College. . . . One little speech of the Professor completely puzzled the President. It was, 'Mr. President, I would not have left *Ædes Christi* for anything less than *Corpus Christi*.'"

The President, failing to catch the point about the House and the Body of Christ, is said to have hoped Professor Ruskin found his rooms comfortable.<sup>2</sup> After the formal admission, there was a luncheon in the President's lodgings:—

"It was there that to the President's favourite remark, deprecatory of the Americanizing of our institutions, Ruskin prettily replied, 'Yes, but even where the mighty waters of Niagara are tumbling and rushing past, little birds have their peaceful nests in holes of the rocks. So we may make us quiet retreats and nests such as this, while the great torrent of humanity rushes by us to its doom.' It was on the same occasion that he compared trees to cities, with their countless multitudes, not merely of sentient buildings, but also of restless, wind-stirred leaves—'so busy, so busy!' The whole impression left of the day's proceedings was mediæval, romantic, idyllic."

To the rooms in *Corpus* Ruskin gradually brought a large portion of his choicest manuscripts, engravings, books, drawings, pictures, and a portion of his beautiful collection of minerals. When at Oxford, he would show his treasures

<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Norris, President  
1843-72.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford and its Colleges*, by J.  
Wells, p. 200

CHAP. X. to pupils, friends, or distinguished visitors, with comments, explanations, rhapsodies, as formerly at Denmark Hill. During absences in Italy he entrusted the keys of his rooms and cabinets to one of the Fellows, with full permission to show them at his pleasure. Here, too, Ruskin was in the habit of giving breakfasts or "tea and counsel"<sup>1</sup> to the undergraduates. He felt meanwhile that few of the elder dons were sympathetic. "He told me one day," says an Oxford friend, "that he was not even sure that the senior men cared to meet him. I did my best to assure him that sympathy and understanding were not lacking—only the opportunity for meeting, which he had never given them." A college dinner-party, to meet the Professor, was the outcome of this talk; and "everything fell out so pleasantly that he asked me to help him to arrange a series of little dinner-parties in his own rooms, to be followed by talks round the fire, which should teach him more of what was going on in that newer Oxford which he had never known."<sup>2</sup> Dean Kitchin hints that Ruskin's entertainments were intended also to inaugurate a return to "the simpler life": "He tried strange things. I remember that he tried to make University society pause in its race for show and display of luxury; he bade us cease from competing dinner-parties, and to take to simple symposia. A few tried it, but their *mouton aux navets* did not attract the Oxford Don more than once; it might begin with simple eating and good talk; champagne and truffles were always lurking behind the door ready to rush in on a hint. Wordsworth's 'Plain Living and High Thinking' was never very popular even in Balliol; and Ruskin's dinner of herbs with love had no greater success."<sup>3</sup> In absence from Oxford, the Dean's recollection has perhaps exaggerated the Lucullan magnificence of the University. Ruskin himself kept a not ungenerous table, and not even

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Plummer's phrase. "Crumpets and Corinthians" was the description given by the undergraduates to the entertainments of another distinguished man at this time.

<sup>2</sup> "Ruskin at Oxford," by "Peter" (the Rev. E. P. Barrow), in *St. George*, vol. vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, p. 43.

a Common Room epicure could find fault with the quality of the paternal sherry. If Ruskin's symposia were discontinued after a few terms, it was due rather to his failing health than to any meagreness of fare.

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Upon many of the younger dons and undergraduates Ruskin's influence was in the highest degree stimulating and suggestive. "Would that I could adequately express in words," says one of them, "the exquisite grace and tact with which Ruskin put his young guests at their ease, and the skill with which he succeeded in inducing even the shyest of us to take part in the conversation."<sup>1</sup> Among those who came under his influence most strongly and appreciated it most warmly was Prince Leopold. He was a regular attendant at Ruskin's lectures, and Ruskin was a frequent guest at his dinner-parties, when, whatever the company might be, the Prince almost invariably seated the Professor at his side. The acquaintance thus formed ripened into an affectionate friendship. Out of term-time the Prince used to correspond with Ruskin about books and pictures, and their common love of music and of chess was a further bond. "There was one heart," says Frederic Myers, "to which the Prince's heart went forth with a loving reverence such as he never felt for any other man"; and the relation continued to the end of the Prince's life:—

"Still was Mr. Ruskin the honoured teacher; still was it possible to watch, in fuller maturity, the contact of the elder and the younger mind. Who could help thinking of Plato's great conception, where the spirit which once has looked on truth in the wake of some divinity in the ideal world seeks out on earth the awakening intelligence most apt to follow, and fashions that young life to greatness 'after the likeness of the tutelary god'? It seemed as though that teacher—who, if any man, has 'gazed in clear radiance on visions innocent and fair'—had found a 'royal soul' to whom to prophesy, and from whose answering fervour virtue and blessing might be born."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "A Reminiscence of Ruskin," by Michael Macmillan, in *St. George*, vol. x. p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> "Leopold, Duke of Albany," reprinted in *Science and a Future Life*, pp. 220, 240.



CHAP. The Prince's admiration for Ruskin was eloquently expressed  
X. in the first public address which he delivered :—

“We have seen a man in whom all the gifts of refinement and of genius meet, and who yet has not grudged to give his best to all ; who has made it his main effort—by gifts, by teaching, by sympathy—to spread among the artisans of Sheffield and the labourers of our English fields the power of drawing the full measure of instruction and happiness from this wonderful world, on which rich and poor can gaze alike. Such a man we have seen in Professor Ruskin ; and amongst all the lessons which those who have had the privilege of his teaching and of his friendship must have gained to carry with them through life, none, I think, can have sunk deeper than the lesson that the highest wisdom and the highest pleasure need not be costly or exclusive, but may be almost as cheap and as free as air,—and that the greatness of a nation must be measured, not by her wealth or her apparent power, but by the degree in which all her people have learnt to gather from the world of books, of Art, and of Nature, a pure and an ennobling joy.”<sup>1</sup>

These words pleased Ruskin greatly. “Very beautiful in themselves,” he wrote, “and—I say it solemnly—just ; more than ever I read before of friends’ sayings. It is strange—I had no conception he saw so far into things or into *me*.”<sup>2</sup>

### III

Of the so-called “æsthetic movement,” which had borrowed from Ruskin some of its catchwords, such as “entirely precious,” he had an utter loathing. It was perhaps partly in order to dissociate himself from Postlethwaites or Maudles that Ruskin embarked upon the road-digging experiment, which in the great world attracted more attention than any of his other work at Oxford. Ruskin, for all his idealism,

<sup>1</sup> Speech at the Mansion House, in support of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, February 19, 1879. The passage is printed, by grace of

the Duchess of Albany, from the original MS.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Susan Beever, Feb. 1879.

was constantly bent upon practice. He taught in his lectures that the fine arts, and especially the art of landscape painting, require, as a condition of their perfection, a happy country life. He taught, too, incidentally, that manual labour is a condition of a completely healthy and rounded human existence, and he deplored the over-importance attached in England to merely athletic exercise. He wanted the exercise necessary to the health of young Oxford to produce some tangible result. Also, what he *said* in his lectures, he always went on to *show*. Just as he illustrated a discussion of Greek art by getting his pupils to examine and handle actual coins, so he desired to make them discover what the work of a day-labourer really was, and by some practical piece of serviceable toil, to come into personal contact with the lives of the poor and the conditions of rural life. This was the genesis, in Ruskin's mind, of the road-digging experiment; the choice of a spot for it introduces us to another side of Ruskin's life at Oxford. He was used, when he tired of the view of back-walls in Broad Street, or when he felt the need of greater quiet than could always be secured in College, to migrate into country quarters at Abingdon—thus anticipating a movement which has covered the heights of Headington and Boar's Hill with so many pleasant villas of University residents. He liked the walk or drive from Abingdon to Oxford, thus enjoying Turner's view of the city, and rejoicing in spring-time in "the wild hyacinths opening in flakes of blue fire in Bagley Wood."<sup>1</sup> The country more immediately around Oxford was painful to him. "He told me once," says an Oxford friend, "that he could not walk with me to the Upper River through Port Meadow, because, to do so, he would have to pass through 'Jericho'"; and in one of his Oxford lectures he spoke despairingly of the new suburbs of the city.<sup>2</sup> Let no one suppose that such expressions had anything of affectation in them. The poverty, of which the sight afflicted him, he strove, as occasion offered, to alleviate, and in so doing endured pains which he might have avoided. "At the very time when he was working in the Ruskin School he

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Eagle's Nest*, § 95.

CHAP. had settled in lodgings across the road an apprentice-lad  
 X. from Sheffield, far gone in consumption, and then almost dying. The poor fellow would pour out his tale of the woes of Sheffield grinders, and was too weak to know when to stop."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's quarters in Abingdon were at the "Crown and Thistle," where he stayed, on and off, for several months in 1871, and where occasionally he would entertain his friends. The march of "improvements" gave him much to deplore,<sup>2</sup> but there was enough of the old world left in the picturesque churches, gateways, streets, and alms-houses of the town to afford compensation. He was fond of the country walks, and in talking with the peasants he made opportunities for timely charity. He found a little girl playing by the roadside, because she had no garden. He rented a tiny piece of ground for her, and sent the child herself to learn shepherding.<sup>3</sup>

He was especially fond of the walk to Ferry Hincksey—"the sweetest of all our old village churches," which he caused his friend Mr. Albert Goodwin to paint: the drawing is in the Oxford Collection—the haunted ground, too, of Matthew Arnold's "Scholar Gipsy." Unless one takes the ferry, the way to Ferry (or North) Hincksey lies by the "Seven Bridge Road" out of Oxford; after the last of the bridges is crossed, a lane runs off to the left, which drops presently into a track leading through damp fields to the village. Some cottages bordered on a piece of green, and the carts, coming across the green for want of a road, cut it up into ruts. It was here that Ruskin obtained permission to make a new road for the carts to use, and so leave the green in fair order; and "thither a gang of undergraduates in flannels, with spades, picks, and barrows, went day by day, while the Professor came forth sometimes and applauded them at their task."<sup>4</sup> The following letter which Ruskin wrote to Acland for transmission to the owner of the land—Mr. Harcourt, of Nuneham and Stanton Harcourt—gives his own account of the scheme:—

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Barrow in *St. George*, vol. vi. p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> See *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Fors*, Letter 67.

<sup>4</sup> *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, p. 45. The Dean's account of the details of the road, etc., is not very accurate.

“HERNE HILL, 28th March, '74.—I have not courage to write directly to Mr. Harcourt, at length enough to explain what I have to ask of him—the bearing of it, I mean, for the thing itself is inexplicable enough in few words—but if you will kindly see him, or, if you cannot at present, introduce the matter to him with a word or two, and enclose this letter, I do not doubt his kind consent. In the first place, I want to show my Oxford drawing-class my notion of what a country road should be. I am always growling and howling about rails, and I want them to see what I would have instead, beginning with a quite by-road through villages. Now I don't know in all England a lovelier *site* of road than the lane along the foot of the hills past Ferry Hincksey, and I want Mr. Harcourt's leave to take up the bit of it immediately to the south of the village, and bring it this spring into the prettiest shape I can. I want to level one or two bits where the water lodges, to get the ruts out of the rest, and sow the banks with the wild flowers that ought to grow on them; and this I want to do with delicatest touching, putting no rough workmen on the ground, but keeping all loveliness it *has*. This is my first, not my chief object. My chief object is to let my pupils feel the pleasures of *useful* muscular work, and especially of the various and amusing work involved in getting a Human Pathway rightly made through a lovely country, and rightly adorned. You haven't attended my pretty lectures as you ought, you know! and so you don't know how strongly I have urged as the root of all good in any of the arts, from highest to lowest, the founding of all beauty and useful purpose, and the sanctification of useful purpose by affectionate grace-giving or decoration. Now that country road under the slope of the hill with its irregular line of trees, sheltering yet not darkening it, is capable of being made one of the loveliest things in this English world by only a little tenderness and patience in easy labour. We can get all stagnant water carried away, of course, with the simplest arrangements of fall, and we can make the cottages more healthy, and the walk, within reach of little time and slight strength from Oxford, far more beautiful than any college gardens can be. So, as you *do* know, I have got one or two of my men to promise me that they will do what work is necessary with their own shoulders. I will send down my own gardener to be at their command, with



CHAP. what under work may here and there be necessary which they cannot  
 X. do with pleasure to themselves, and I will meet whatever expense is needful for cartage and the like ; and all that I ask of Mr. Harcourt is permission to make the road sound, to carry the drainage under it and away, and trim the banks to my mind. But all depends upon the place remaining, at least for this summer, in other respects what it is now ; the quietude to it and entirely rustic character of its exquisite little church and beautifully placed cottages being the necessary condition of showing what a pure country scene may be made by the active care of gentle minds and delicate hands. I had more to say, but my paper says, I suppose rightly, better not, except that, I am, ever your loving friend."

Ruskin had started the scheme in the spring term by getting some Balliol men, who were ready to take it up, to breakfast at Corpus. The first of the diggers' breakfasts was on March 24, 1874. "I remember," says Mr. Wedderburn, "that Ruskin on this occasion described to us his ideal state of society. The breakfast took place in the Common Room, and we went to Ruskin's rooms after it. He was to go abroad at once while we started the work, and I remember saying to him, 'Well, we will do the rough work, and you can make it beautiful when you come back'; on which he held out both his hands and shook both of mine with gratitude. Ruskin was abroad until the October term; he then used to come and superintend the work himself. The spade-work was over by this time, I think, but the stones had to be broken for the road, and we found stone-breaking none so easy." The Professor had qualified himself by practice in this part of the job. "When I had to direct road-making at Oxford," he says, "I sate, myself, with an iron-masked stone-breaker, on his heap, to break stones beside the London road, just under Iffley Hill, till I knew how to advise my too impetuous pupils to effect their purposes in that matter, instead of breaking the heads of their hammers off (a serious item in our daily expenses)." <sup>1</sup>

Such, then, was Ruskin's experiment. "The world," says Dean Kitchin, "naturally laughed." There were facetious

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 197.

letters in the London papers;<sup>1</sup> "Platonic Dialogues" in the University squibs; fancy pictures of "Amateur Navvies at Oxford" in the illustrated papers; and in the window at Shrimpton's in the Broad, consecrated to cartoons, a sketch of the Professor of Fine Art with pick and shovel as "President of the Amateur Landscape Gardening Society." To walk over to Hincksey and laugh at the diggers was a fashionable afternoon amusement. Ruskin took the ridicule good-naturedly; his sense of humour was at least as alert as that of his revilers. The road which his pupils made is, he was heard to admit, about the worst in the three kingdoms (though in fact it is passable enough), and for any level places in it he used to give the credit to his old gardener, Downs, whom he summoned to Oxford to act as Professor of Digging. But he had a serious purpose; and the experiment, even from the point of view of road-making, was by no means barren. An inch of practice is sometimes worth a yard of preaching; and Ruskin's road-digging experiment gave a real stimulus to "the gospel of labour," of the same kind as the later and independent teaching of Count Tolstoi. How widely Ruskin's experiment came to be talked about is shown by the case of the driver of a Derbyshire coach. He was one of the old school, full of quips and cranks, fond of his horses, proud of the lovely scenery through which he drove them. As he was coming to the top of a hill one day, and casting his eye down the next descent and up the next hill facing, he lifted his whip, and drawing his hand across his face, said: "I wish Professor Ruskin would bring his young men from Oxford and fill up that hollow; they would

<sup>1</sup> *Punch*, however, was on Ruskin's side:—

"Pity we have for the man who thinks he  
Proves Ruskin fool for work like this.  
Why shouldn't young Oxford lend hands to Hincksey,  
Though Doctrinaires may take it amiss?  
Careless wholly of critic's menace,  
Scholars of Ruskin, to him be true;  
The truth he has writ in *The Stones of Venice*  
May be taught by the Stones of Hincksey too."

The *Spectator*, also, approved; see the passage quoted in *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 46 ("Notes and Correspondence").

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X.

be doing a kindness to these horses.”<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, by this experiment which attracted so much attention, causing some to consider, if many to smile, was a pioneer in an educational movement which is now spreading. In the greater Public Schools, and at the old Universities, the rage for mere athletics continues, indeed, unabated; but the importance of manual dexterity is coming to be recognised even in the old schools, while there are many newer foundations in which athletics are tempered by daily practice in the elementary arts of digging and gardening, upon which life upon this earth is based.<sup>2</sup> Educationalists of “the new school” recognise, too, that a sound principle lies underneath the methods which Dickens caricatured—“C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When a boy knows this out of the book, he goes and does it.” Mr. Squeers only lost the credit of an educational pioneer by misapplying his principles.

But Ruskin, in preaching “d-i-g, dig, go and do it,” had a further object in view. His “class” at Hincxey weeded out the weaker brethren, and drew the more devoted closer to him. Some of the Oxford road-diggers were attracted to the work, less for its own sake, perhaps, than for the reward of it—the reward of the breakfast-parties and talks in the Professor’s rooms at Corpus; but they had to do the digging first. It was in Ruskin’s lectures, talks, and digging-parties that the seeds were sown, or watered, of that practical interest in social questions

<sup>1</sup> “An Evening with Ruskin at Walkley,” by the Rev. T. W. Holmes, *Sheffield Independent*, Jan. 5, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of August 26, 1889, on “The New School,” founded at Abbotsholme by Dr. Cecil Reddie; and “An Essay in Education,” entitled *Bedales School*, by J. H. Badley (Cambridge University Press, 1900). Reference may also be made to a Paper on “Schoolboys as Navvies,” by Mr.

J. L. Paton, High Master of Manchester Grammar School, in *St. George*, January 1904, and to “Manual Training as an Element in a Liberal Education” (No. 2 of the “Occasional Papers” issued in connexion with Clayesmore School). “Shrewsbury, Sedbergh, and Bath College boys have all done navvy work,” says Mr. Paton, “on their own playing fields, and now the Manchester boys are doing the same.”

which was to be the next Oxford Movement. Among the undergraduate road-diggers were Alfred Milner, and Arnold Toynbee—that rare and beautiful spirit, most persuasive of talkers, most devoted of workers, whose name cannot be mentioned by any of his friends without some word of affectionate recollection. Toynbee rose by his zeal in the Hincksey work to the rank of foreman. “He was thus entitled,” adds his biographer, “to appear frequently at those breakfasts which Mr. Ruskin gave to his young friends, and enlivened with quaint, eloquent conversation. Upon men like Toynbee, intercourse with Mr. Ruskin had a stimulating effect more durable than the actual improvement of the road near Hincksey. Toynbee came to think very differently from Mr. Ruskin upon many subjects, and especially upon democracy, but always regarded him with reverence and affection.”<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to say in how many leaders and followers of the “young Oxford” movement Ruskin’s influence worked directly or indirectly as a stimulus and an inspiration. What is certain is, that the actual course taken by that movement has followed the principles preached by him. “I tell you,” said the Professor of Fine Art, at the close of one of his lectures, “that neither sound art, policy, nor religion can exist in England until, neglecting, if it must be, your own pleasure-gardens and pleasure-chambers, you resolve that the streets which are the habitation of the poor, and the fields which are the playgrounds of their children, shall be again restored to the rule of the spirits, whosoever they are, in earth and heaven, that ordain and reward, with constant and conscious felicity, all that is decent and orderly, beautiful and pure.”<sup>2</sup> It was the conviction of this truth that had no small share in leading to the Universities’ Settlements in East London and other cities.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arnold Toynbee*, by F. C. Montague, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Art of England*, § 123.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter to one of his diggers Ruskin “expresses a hope that some of them may band themselves together, one day, and go

out in a kind of Benedictine brotherhood to cultivate waste places and make life tolerable in our great cities for the children of the poor” (see *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1900, pp. 572–576).



## IV

CHAP.  
X.

The principles upon which Ruskin acted in the organisation of art-teaching at Oxford were defined in his first lecture. "A youth is sent to the Universities, not to be apprenticed to a trade, nor even always to be advanced in a profession, but always to be made a gentleman and a scholar." The scope of the Professorship was not to train artists, but to teach the elements of drawing and the principles of criticism. It was in order to carry out this double function of the Slade Professorship that the Ruskin Drawing School and the Ruskin Art Collection were established. He offered to the University, if it would provide him with the necessary accommodation, to present a collection of Examples and to endow a Drawing Master-ship. The University had agreed in principle to the proposal; but in the summer of 1871 Ruskin fell ill at Matlock when the transaction was still uncompleted. It remained much in his mind. Acland had gone to Matlock to see him, and they had talk on the subject. "One day Ruskin, who was weak and suffering, and confined to his bed, suddenly drew out a cheque for £5000 from under his pillow and said, 'There, Henry, that's to endow the Master.' Acland was naturally inclined to demur at such an unconventional transaction, but his patient's health forbade excitement or argument, and the cheque was taken and invested in the name of Trustees."<sup>1</sup> The Master of Drawing appointed by Ruskin, to assist him with the University class and to take charge of a General class, was Mr. Alexander Macdonald, to whose steady teaching the Professor bore repeated testimony, and who still (1911) occupies the post. Ruskin found in him a valued friend, and they had a common hobby in chess. Ruskin was more anxious, as perhaps a University Professor should be, to lay down standard principles of teaching than to attract large numbers of scholars. His principles would, he hoped, be adopted in other schools; and to this end

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, p. 371.

he wrote during his Professorship the lessons in elementary drawing entitled *The Laws of Fésolé*. He also prepared, but did not formally publish, a series of drawing exercises, engraved in folio size. These were to be known as "The Oxford Art School Series." "It matters comparatively little," he said, "whether few or many of our students learn to draw; but it matters much that all who learn should be taught with accuracy."<sup>1</sup> They were few. "As for the undergraduates," he said in 1883, "I never succeeded in getting more than two or three of them into my school, even in its palmiest days."<sup>2</sup> He resolved from the first to insist on a high standard. He discouraged casual students, and would have nothing to do with dabblers. Of the few who attended his classes, some greatly profited. Mr. Selwyn Image has described how he was set to copy a drawing of laurel (after Baccio Baldini)—

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"full of Ruskin's characteristic nervous handling. What little training I had had before was under the old South Kensington system. Nervous, sensitive handling was not encouraged under that system: the thing was to draw hard outlines, hard as nails. Into such hard outlines I did actually have the audacity to translate this splendid drawing of Ruskin's. . . . He came round and looked. He said only a few quiet words. Then he took the brush into his hand, and showed me what kind of touch was worth having, what kind of line and form was fine and not fine, and wherein lay the splendid quality of design in this Apollo's sceptre. . . . Whatever small power of Design I may possess, I date the dawn of it from that lesson."<sup>3</sup>

The system of teaching laid down by Ruskin was that defined in the Inaugural Lectures. "I have started my pupils," he wrote to Professor Norton, "on a totally new and defiantly difficult practice; drawing all with the brush, as on Greek vases." They were "to begin by getting command of line;—that is to say, by learning to draw

<sup>1</sup> *Aratra Pentelici*, Preface, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> E. T. Cook's *Studies in Ruskin*, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> *St. George*, vol. vi. p. 293.

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a steady line, limiting with absolute correctness the form or space you intend it to limit; to proceed by getting command over flat tints, so that you may be able to fill the spaces you have enclosed evenly, either with shade or colour, according to the school you adopt; and, finally, to obtain the power of adding such fineness of drawing, within the masses, as shall express their undulation, and their characters of form and texture."<sup>1</sup> By young ladies, the Ruskin Drawing School was, and is, fairly well attended; but, so far as members of the University are concerned, the drawing-desks were, and I believe are, for the most part empty. In looking back, Ruskin felt a keen sense of disappointment and failure. He laid all the blame on his own shortcomings, and hazarded the opinion that, if he had spent his whole time and energy upon his Oxford work, he might have succeeded in establishing a real school of art—with subsidiary schools of sculpture, architecture, metal work, and manuscript illumination, and in gathering around the Slade Professorship a large band of serious students—within the University. But all this may be doubted. The inaugural lectures of most Professors meet with the same fate. They set forth schemes of work which are based on the assumption that Oxford is a home of disinterested study; the assumption is hardly in accordance with the facts, and so the Professor's hopes come to nought. The undergraduates are partly our "young barbarians all at play," and partly students working for specified examinations. There is no Examination in the Fine Arts, and at Oxford a school which is not recognised in the "schools" is doomed, so far as any wide numbers go, to failure.

## V

The Ruskin Art Collection, though as yet little known and little used, is an abiding monument to the Professor's work at Oxford. It is contained in cabinets arranged round

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Art*, § 139.

the Drawing School. These cabinets, devised by Ruskin, are of polished mahogany, and externally resemble somewhat a set of office washing-stands. Each of them holds either twelve or twenty-five drawings. The drawings are all framed—some in plain oak frames, others in a gilt beading of Ruskin's design<sup>1</sup>—and each frame fits into a groove, an ivory label giving the number, and a small leather strap for taking out the frame being fitted on one side. The contrivance combines in an ingenious way security from exposure to light and dust with handiness for reference. The cardinal idea of the Ruskin Art Collection is to show how the study of art and the practice of elementary drawing may be made an integral part of general education. The examples are thus strictly and essentially educational. The historical significance or artistic *quality* in each specimen is what is thought of, not its artistic *finish* or material value. Hence, the quaint unexpectedness which was characteristic of Ruskin's lectures meets one at almost every turn in these cabinets. "Priceless" Turner drawings are arranged side by side with coloured prints from old books of travels. Exquisite studies from nature by Ruskin and his assistants, or by other artists, keep company with photographs, now, alas! too often faded and not renewed. One passes from early "states" of choice engravings to common prints. One soon finds, however, that each specimen sufficiently fulfils its educational purpose, and any curators or committees who are organising educational collections of fine art would find a visit to the Ruskin Drawing School of great interest. It is characteristic of the all-embracing curiosity of the Japanese in their search for the best that is known, thought, or done in the world, that among recent visitors to the School one of the most observant and appreciative was a Professor of Fine Art from Tokyo.

Ruskin, as we have seen in a previous chapter,<sup>2</sup> was no believer in nonsense exercises in drawing. "Every exercise that I prepare for you," he said in his Inaugural Lecture

<sup>1</sup> This design, easily recognised when once seen, often enables one to identify drawings as having once belonged to Ruskin.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 30.



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"will be either a portion of some important example of ancient art or of some natural object. However rudely or unsuccessfully you may draw it, you will nevertheless have learned what no words could have as forcibly or completely taught you, either respecting early art or organic structure; and I am thus certain that not a moment you spend attentively will be altogether wasted, and that, generally, you will be twice gainer by every effort."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in Ruskin's examples, exercises in outline are combined with incidental lessons in heraldry; the plant studies are associated with Greek mythology; those of animals are approached through types on ancient coins and mediæval sculpture; and examples are placed in juxtaposition in order to illustrate national characteristics.

Ruskin intended his examples to serve as the apparatus for a school of criticism and for a school of drawing. With the former object in view he collected the "Standard" and the "Reference" Series; with the latter in view, the "Educational" and the "Rudimentary" Series. The scope of the *Standard Series* is sufficiently indicated by its title; it was to be a series of "*standards* to which you may at once refer on any questionable point, and by the study of which you may gradually attain an instinctive sense of right, which will afterwards be liable to no serious error. . . . The real utility of the series will depend on its restricted extent—on the severe exclusion of all second-rate, superfluous, or even attractively varied examples—and on the confining the students' attention to a few types of what is insuperably good."<sup>2</sup> Some people suppose that only quantitative study enables a man to be a judge of art.<sup>3</sup> A student who should go through the Ruskin Art Collection, noting the references to the several specimens in Ruskin's books, would learn how much instruction may be drawn by subtle analysis from comparatively few examples.

The Collection has, however, incidental interests, only second to its main and educational one. It is, for instance, a "Ruskin" collection—the largest and most representative

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Art*, § 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, § 21.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. I. p. 368.

collection which anywhere exists of Ruskin's artistic work, comprising as it does nearly 300 pieces from his hand. The quantity of Ruskin's literary productions is extraordinary; but when one takes count of his work as a draughtsman as well his industry becomes amazing. Moreover, the quality of his artistic work is as fine as the quantity of it is large. I have given instances already of the amount of time spent by him upon rendering details.<sup>1</sup> "I've been two whole days at work," he writes at another time, "on the purple marsh orchis alone."<sup>2</sup> "No one has the least notion," he explains, "of the quantity of manual labour I have to go through to discharge my duty as a teacher of Art. Look at the frontispiece to Letter 20th,<sup>3</sup> which is photographed from one of my architectural sketches; and if you can draw, copy a bit of it; try merely the bead moulding with its dentils, in the flat arch over the three small ones, lowest on the left. Then examine those three small ones themselves. You think I have drawn them distorted, carelessly, I suppose. No. That distortion is essential to the Gothic of the Pisan school; and I measured every one of the curves of those cusps on the spot, to the tenth of an inch."<sup>4</sup> Any one who examines Ruskin's handiwork in the Drawing School will see that the measuring of curves to the tenth of an inch—conspicuous enough already in the illustrations to *The Stones of Venice* and in the *Examples of Venetian Architecture*—was applied not to architecture only, but to every natural form. No matter what the subject may be, whether it be as lofty as the towers of Lucca or as lowly as the grass of the field, the same infinite patience is conspicuous in his studies. Not that Ruskin's work is inartistic from excess of finish, from painting what he knows by microscopic examination to be there rather than what he sees. In many cases, indeed, he does break this great artistic canon; but he does so deliberately, in order to make

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. pp. 368, 511, 520; Mary of the Thorn, Pisa"; formerly and in this Volume, pp. 152, 246. No. 80 in the Reference Series,

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 66 now at Sheffield.  
(“Notes and Correspondence”).

<sup>4</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 57.

<sup>3</sup> “Part of the Chapel of St.

CHAP. of his specimens lessons in collateral science as well as ex-  
 X. amples of draughtsmanship. But the best of his sketches are remarkable for the success with which breadth of general effect is combined with wealth of local detail. It is in his architectural sketches that his artistic gift is seen at its best, but the range of his studies is very wide. Besides drawings of architecture and flowers, there are numerous studies of clouds; etchings from Turner drawings; studies of animals; exquisite sketches also of birds; sketches of shells and fish, and of Japanese enamels; many admirable landscapes, especially of Swiss scenes; and studies in heraldic design. It is amusing, after noticing the evidence afforded by these cabinets of Ruskin's long and various practice of Art, to recall the criticisms which have spoken of the Slade Professor as "learned in many matters, and of much experience in all, save his subject," and as "talking for forty years of what he has never done."<sup>1</sup> The limitations of his skill and practice as an artist should, however, be remembered. He never attained any mastery of the oil-medium; he drew the figure comparatively little; he left many of his drawings unfinished, being content as soon as he had seized the particular point or impression with which he was concerned; he was an observer, not an inventor. "I doubt if any artist," writes Sir William Richmond, "has ever drawn

<sup>1</sup> *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics*, by J. A. McN. Whistler, 1878, p. 17; and *Mr. Whistler's "Ten o'Clock,"* 1888, p. 20. See also Sir Edward Poynter's *Lectures on Art*, 1897, p. 219 ("Mr. Ruskin's ignorance of the practical side of art"). It is interesting to note that, though many opponents of Ruskin's principles allege that he has "never done anything," except write, others take a precisely contrary line. "In one respect only," says the *Edinburgh Review* (Jan. 1888), "we are prepared to give Mr. Ruskin nearly unqualified admiration, namely, in regard to his own artistic work as far as it

has gone: with the exception of those unhappy illustrations to the *Seven Lamps*, his own drawing, of architecture especially, is admirable. When two or three of his own landscapes were exhibited some years ago in Bond Street, along with his Turners, our impression at the time was that they were equal to most of the Turner drawings in that collection; at all events, his drawings of portions of St. Mark's, exhibited more recently at the Society of Water-Colours Exhibition, were of the highest class, and such as, indeed, of their kind, it would not be possible to surpass."



architecture with more feeling, or made it of rarer artistic interest than Ruskin. He had a most refined sense of form, and as a colourist he was no less remarkable, but it is strange that the inventive faculty which was so strongly marked in his writings, does not appear in his drawings at all. He said to me once, 'I have no power of design; I can only draw what I see.'"<sup>1</sup> What he claimed for his practice in art was that it was enough to make him know what he was talking about; and for his writings, that they were founded on artistic studies both after the old masters and after nature. In 1873 he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours. "Nothing ever pleased me more," he said; "I have always been abusing the artists, and now they have complimented me. It's very nice to think they give me credit for knowing something about art."<sup>2</sup>

The contents of the Ruskin Drawing School are not, however, interesting only for the sake of Ruskin himself. The specimens include, by Ruskin's generosity, many engravings and drawings of great interest and value in themselves.<sup>3</sup> The mere fitting of the room cost him three or four hundred pounds, and in *Fors Clavigera* he says that on the series of examples he had spent "two thousand and more." This calculation referred only to purchases made specially for the Drawing School, and is exclusive of examples already in his own collection which he transferred to the University. Whatever was wanted to fill a place in his scheme, he gave freely. Thus he cut "all to pieces" a copy of the volume of superb woodcuts known as the "Triumph of Maximilian" "for the Oxford men to learn drawing from."

<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin as I knew Him," *St. George*, vol. v. pp. 291-292. "'Not that I could have done anything great,' he told me, 'but I could have made such beautiful records of things.' . . . To a friend who asked him why he did not complete a landscape of which only the middle was elaborated, he replied, 'Oh, I've no time to do

the tailoring'" (M. H. Spielmann, in *St. George*, vol. iv. p. 230).

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Collingwood's Prefatory note to the Ruskin Exhibition held at the Society's Gallery in 1901.

<sup>3</sup> For a full account of the collection, I may refer the reader to vol. xxi. in the Library Edition.



CHAP. He parted also with pages from the choicest manuscripts,  
X. and with some of his most cherished Turners.

Ruskin began to accumulate and arrange his specimens immediately on his appointment to the Professorship, and from time to time he printed catalogues of different portions of the collection. In 1875 he made over the whole collection by deed of gift to the University. The deed requires, among other things, that there shall be made, "and at all times kept perfect and complete, one or more catalogue or catalogues." This requirement has not been fulfilled by the University, but, so far as opportunity served, I did the work in 1905 for the Library Edition (vol. xxi.). Prince Leopold was one of the original Trustees, and he, with the Princess Alice and the Grand Duke of Hesse, witnessed the execution of the deed. The Ruskin Drawing School was then one of the new sights of Oxford, and from time to time princes and princesses, who might be visiting at the Deanery, came to be shown round by the Professor. "They seemed to think their morning pleasant," Ruskin wrote on one such occasion to his cousin Joan, "and the Baron [in attendance] was very eager in asking me to come and visit him in Hesse-Darmstadt." Princess Alice on this occasion, having examined some of the cabinets, "eagerly asked me," wrote Ruskin further (May 31, 1875), "to 'lend' her some drawings for her children. So of course I asked if I might make them for her and give them to her, and of course she was good enough to be pleased; and then I asked her to tell me what she would have, and she said 'a water-lily' and some tree stems. And I think I shall do one for her that she'll like. For she verily knows what drawing is." The Princess, it seems from letters of Ruskin to Prince Leopold, sent for the Professor's inspection some of her own drawings, which he was invited to return with critical remarks and hints.

It is a great pity that the Ruskin Art Collection, thus rich in various interest, should not become better known and more generally useful; for there is a real service which it is capable of rendering to the artistic education of the country. The hope and endeavour of all those who

believe in the humanising mission of Art is that an Art Gallery—small but select, and simple though complete within its range—should be established in every town, and even in every school. Such collections may be formed, as Ruskin said, “both more perfectly, and more easily, than would commonly be supposed.”<sup>1</sup> The essential purposes of them must be those which Ruskin had in view in collecting his examples—to exhibit what is best in each department of Art, to illustrate historical development, to stimulate or suggest the love of the natural objects portrayed, and to arrange such a course of practical study as shall incidentally conduce to the previous purposes. Of collections of this kind Oxford might well set the standard. Whether the University of Oxford is ever likely to produce a flourishing School of Art may well be doubted; but there is no good reason why its Ruskin Art Collection, with additions and revisions, should not serve the purpose of an exemplar for local schools and museums. Ruskin’s connexion with the School and the collection is commemorated—as well as in its name—by a marble bust of himself, executed by Sir J. E. Boehm, placed there by his friends. Their piety is laudable; but the generosity and self-devotion of the founder of the School is surely deserving also of that more acceptable memorial which consists in the wider fulfilment of his purposes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Art*, § 21.

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed suggestions, I may refer to my Introduction to vol. xxi. of the Library Edition.

## CHAPTER XI

### FIRST OXFORD LECTURES

(1870, 1871)

"I conceive it to be the function of this Professorship to establish both a practical and critical school of fine art for English gentlemen: practical, so that, if they draw at all, they may draw rightly; and critical, so that, being first directed to such works of existing art as will best reward their study, they may afterwards make their patronage of living artists delightful to themselves in their consciousness of its justice, and, to the utmost, beneficial to their country."—*Lectures on Art.*

RUSKIN gave his first lecture at Oxford on February 8, 1870. It had been announced for the Theatre in the Museum, but long before the appointed hour the room was so densely crowded, and there were so many disappointed of admission, that Acland begged the audience to adjourn, with the lecturer at their head, to the Sheldonian Theatre—the place where, thirty-one years before, he had recited his prize poem. There had been no such scene in Oxford since 1841, when Dr. Arnold gave his inaugural lecture as Professor of Modern History.<sup>1</sup> The attendance remained very large, though Ruskin declined to repeat the experiment of lecturing in so large a room. At various times he made efforts to exclude the ladies, who threatened, by their greater pertinacity, to oust the University men, and many of his subsequent courses were delivered twice—first to the University, and then to a general audience.

#### I

The Inaugural Lectures were published shortly after their delivery by the Clarendon Press. Ruskin not unjustly

<sup>1</sup> See Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, ed. 1901, p. 619.

regarded these *Lectures on Art* as being one of his principal works. On the general topics treated in Lectures i.-iv.—the place of art in University education, and art in relation successively to Religion, Morals, and Use—they give his most matured views, as also they contain some of his finest pieces of rhetoric. Of the remaining lectures, which, limiting themselves to painting, treat specifically of Line, Light, and Colour, it has been well said that “none but a master practised in the art, and with extraordinary gifts of perception and expression, could have written them. The attention of the student is not confined to technical detail, but is directed to the broader aspects of the subject by general statements in regard to the different schools of painting. Some of these statements may seem to require modification, but they all serve to illustrate leading facts and principles, and to quicken observation and reflection.”<sup>1</sup> “I wrote every syllable of these lectures,” said Ruskin, “in utmost tenderness, and with a care more scrupulous than a sculptor’s last finishing of a Parian statue”; and he specified a single sentence as having taken him at “least half-an-hour’s work.”<sup>2</sup> The lectures were brought to an end in March, but Ruskin spent some further time in Oxford arranging the examples for his Drawing School, and preparing the first Catalogue of them. After this spell of work, he felt the need of change, both to recover strength and to carry forward various studies for future Oxford courses.

## II

He was abroad for three months, from the end of April to the end of July, with his friend Mrs. Hilliard and her daughter, and his cousin Joan. He took with him, in addition to his valet and a maid for the ladies, his gardener Downs, whom he desired to consult on Alpine schemes. He wrote no detailed diary, but letters to his

<sup>1</sup> Introduction by Professor Norton to the American “Brantwood” edition of *Lectures on Art*.  
<sup>2</sup> See Library Edition, vol. xxix. p. 196 n.



CHAP. mother and friends give us glimpses of the travellers. "I  
 XI. am examining the mountains," he wrote to his mother from Martigny (May 13), "with a view to my plan for the redemption of their barren slopes. There is just difficulty enough to make it a sublime piece of manual work." The mountains brought him pleasure also, though tinged with sadness. Even when his senses were most keenly touched by beautiful scenes, the still, sad music of humanity was ever sounding in his ears. "We had a lovely sunrise on the Jura," he writes (Geneva, April 30), "and an exquisite morning among them, and I very much enjoy giving so much pleasure as this whole journey is giving." "All these beautiful places," he writes next day, "are now more to me in some ways than ever; had they remained as they once were, I could have been deeply happy, though sad; now, the uppermost feeling is a hard indignation and amazement, and the next one of wistful longing for the old time."

Ruskin had meant this tour to be a real holiday; but in Italy he could not be idle. "Now that I am the 'professor,'" he writes from Milan (May 21), "I have so much to notice and set down every moment of my day in Italy." From Venice he wrote (May 30): "I go out and have my cup of coffee in the sunshine, and then sit in my boat, as I used to do with Harding, and draw, not as I used to do with delight, for I know too well now what drawing should be, but with a pleasant sense that other people will have real pleasure in what I am doing." Some of the drawings were placed in his Art Collection at Oxford. In addition to drawings of Venetian palaces, Ruskin devoted himself to a close study of Carpaccio (as in the preceding year) and of Tintoret. He planned at once a new course of lectures. "I have resolved," he wrote to his mother (June 13), "to give my five autumn lectures at Oxford on *one* picture, Tintoret's Paradise. It will be, rather, too large, than too narrow, a subject. What a strange thing it is that the largest, actually in canvas, should also be the best, picture in the world." Ultimately the whole course on Tintoret resolved itself into the one lecture, which ended with an enthusiastic description of the "Paradise." In Tuscany a new star came into

his ken, as he thus explains in a letter to Mrs. Cowper  
Temple:—

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“PISA, 1st July, 1870. . . . I have learned much on this journey, and hope to tell things in the autumn at Oxford that will be of great use, having found a Master of the religious schools at Florence, Filippo Lippi, new to me, though often seen by me, without seeing, in old times, though I had eyes even then for some sights. But this Filippo Lippi has brought me into a new world, being a complete monk, yet an entirely noble painter. Luini is lovely, but not monkish. Lippi is an Angelico with Luini’s strength, or perhaps more, only of earlier date, and with less knowledge.”

Ruskin and his party went to Siena to visit Professor Norton, who had made his temporary home in one of the spacious old villas which lie around that delightful city:—

“He was in a delightful mood,” writes Ruskin’s host; “the clouds which darkened his spirit had lifted for the moment, and all its sunshine and sweetness had free play. He spent much time in drawing the lioness and her cubs at the base of one of the pillars of the wonderful pulpit in the wonderful cathedral. We wandered through the mediæval town, we drove and walked through many of the roads and paths of the picturesque region, and Ruskin enjoyed to the full all the loveliness of the Tuscan landscape, the interest of its historic associations, and the charm of the Italian atmosphere. No guest could have added more to the pleasure of the household.”<sup>1</sup>

The drawing of the lioness and the cubs took its place in the Oxford Collection. The fire-flies, he wrote from Siena to his mother (June 26), “are almost awful in the twilight, as bright as candles, flying in and out of the dark cypresses.” But he was shocked, as one of the party remembered, by Professor Norton’s request that he would “look at the lightning-bugs.” It is an illustration of the keenness of Ruskin’s impressions, and the retentiveness of his memory, that nineteen years later, when the twilight was gathering around him, the

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*, vol. ii. p. 3.

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shining of these fire-flies at Siena remained bright before him. "*How* they shone! moving like fine-broken starlight through the purple leaves." These are words from the closing paragraph of *Præterita*—the last that Ruskin was to print. On his way home Ruskin stayed some days in Switzerland, to see Marie of the Giessbach, and there, as appears from a letter to his mother, he was busy already with Oxford lectures for the autumn, which, as then intended, were to be on Italian painting. The war between France and Germany suddenly broke out, and Ruskin brought his party home lest the ways should be closed.

### III

On returning home Ruskin changed his plan for the next Oxford course. The projected lectures on Italian Painting were abandoned, and a course upon "The Elements of Sculpture" was substituted. He conceived the felicitous thought of illustrating his discourse upon Greek art from coins. The analysis of coins can, as he says, "be certified by easily accessible"—and, it might have been added, by securely dated and wholly unrestored—"examples," and they lend themselves peculiarly well to reproduction by photographic processes. Ruskin, in the large use he made of coins for the illustration of Greek art and history, was in this country a pioneer of methods which are now more generally admitted. Ruskin himself possessed a choice collection of Greek coins, and during the early autumn of 1870 his main preoccupation was the study of them and of the Coin Room at the British Museum.

The lectures were delivered in November and December 1870, and were revised for publication a year later, under the title *Aratra Pentelici*. "Its meaning is," he wrote in sending the sheets of the book to Professor Norton, "that I have traced all the elementary laws of sculpture, as you will see in following sheets, to a right understanding of the power of incision or furrow in marble." A ploughshare, the thus fundamental instrument of sculpture, was duly laid on the table at the first lecture, and the moral lessons,

which with Ruskin always underlaid, and sometimes perhaps overlaid, the artistic, were enforced by reference to "other furrows to be driven than these in the marble of Pentelicus."<sup>1</sup> The technical discussions in this book are full of acuteness; and not less interesting is the theory of the origin of art which Ruskin works into it—the theory of man, like a child with a doll, re-creating himself, representing a world to play with or to worship; to which realistic or idolising instincts is added in nations with progressive art the instinct of order and discipline. The discussion of the spirit of Greek art, with the close examination of particular coins and the comparison between the Greek and the Florentine schools with which the book concludes, is one of the author's closest pieces of critical analysis. "The lectures," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, with just appreciation, "graceful in expression, fertile in suggestion, and original in thought, are a joy to read, and were a genuine example of sound professional guidance, both in the way of judgment and of research."<sup>2</sup> The lectures as delivered or printed give only the half of what Ruskin had planned, for he had partly written discourses on many groups of Greek coins. It was characteristic of the way in which he dovetailed one subject into another that some of these were, as he explained in a letter to Acland, "to join on to Zoology." They were to touch, that is, on various animal-types in Greek art—"The Tortoise of Ægina," "The Eagle of Elis," "The Lion of Leontini," and so forth. Another lecture on Greek art and mythology, entitled *The Story of Arachne*, was delivered at Woolwich on December 13, the Duke of Connaught taking the chair.

## IV

In the previous month Ruskin attended for the first time a meeting of the Metaphysical Society. This famous

<sup>1</sup> In this passage (§ 180) there is perhaps a playful reference (characteristic of Ruskin's Oxford lectures) to "ploughing" in University examinations.

<sup>2</sup> *John Ruskin* ("English Men of Letters" Series), p. 124.



CHAP. but short-lived body had been founded by Tennyson and  
 XI. Sir James Knowles in the previous year, and Ruskin had presently been elected a member of it:—

(To C. E. NORTON.) “Nov. 10, 1870.—I had gone to a dinner of the Metaphysical Society, where Huxley was to read a paper on a Frog’s soul—or appearances of soul. The Deans of Westminster and Canterbury, Bishop of Worcester, Master of Lincoln, Duke of Argyll, Archbishop Manning, Father Dal— something,<sup>1</sup> who said the shrewdest things of any, and Chancellor of Exchequer (who only made jokes) might have made a nice talk of it, but the Duke of Argyll got into logical antagonisms with Huxley, and then nothing came of it. I wanted to change the frog for a toad—and to tell the company something about eyes—but Huxley wouldn’t let himself be taken beyond legs, for that time. I came back impressed more than ever with the frivolous pugnacity of the world,—the campaign in France not more tragic in reality of significance, than the vain dispute over that table.”

Huxley’s paper, entitled “Has a Frog a Soul? and if so, of what Nature is that Soul?” stayed long in Ruskin’s memory, and was used from time to time to point a moral in his books or lectures.<sup>2</sup> A year later (April 25, 1871) Ruskin himself read a paper to the Society on “The Range of Intellectual Conception.” The Society died in 1880—“of too much love,” said Huxley grimly; “because,” said Tennyson, “after ten years of strenuous effort no one had succeeded in even defining the term ‘metaphysics.’” Ruskin’s attempt in his paper, if not to define the term, yet to delimit the scope of the science, was one of many attempts, equally unsuccessful in all ages it would seem, in this direction. On February 12, 1873, Ruskin read a second paper—on *The Nature and Authority of Miracle*; and of this meeting Dr. Magee gave a lively account in a

<sup>1</sup> Father Dalgairns (1818–76), priest of the Brompton Oratory. The Deans of Westminster and Canterbury were Stanley and Alford; the Bishop of Worcester, Henry Philpott; the *Rector* of

Lincoln, Mark Pattison; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was Robert Lowe.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 64; Oxford Lectures, 1875 (Lib. Ed., vol. xxii. p. 504).

letter to his wife, describing the dyspepsia which must have followed had the dishes been as various as the religious creeds of the diners:—

“Lastly Ruskin, who read after dinner a paper on miracles! which we discussed for an hour and a half! Nothing could be calmer, fairer, or even, on the whole, more reverent than the discussion. Nothing flippant or scoffing or bitter was said on either side, and very great ability, both of speech and thought, was shown by most speakers. In my opinion, we, the Christians, had much the best of it. Dalgairns, the priest, was very masterly; Manning, clever and precise and weighty; Froude, very acute, and so was Greg; while Ruskin declared himself delighted ‘with the exquisite accuracy and logical power of the Bishop of Peterborough.’ There is the story of the dinner. Altogether a remarkable and most interesting scene, and a greater gathering of remarkable men than could easily be met elsewhere. We only wanted a Jew and a Mahometan to make our Religious Museum complete.”<sup>1</sup>

A third paper which Ruskin read to the Society (May 11, 1875), on *Social Policy*, was included in *A Joy for Ever*. A compost of Ruskin’s three papers is given in a vivid sketch of the proceedings of the Metaphysical Society by R. H. Hutton.<sup>2</sup> He describes Ruskin’s “deep-toned, musical voice which dwelt with slow emphasis on the most important words of each sentence, and which gave a singular force to the irony with which the speaker’s expression of belief was freely mingled.”

## V

In January and February, 1871, Ruskin delivered a course of lectures at Oxford on *Landscape*. These were essentially lectures to his own class, and the point of them lay much in the illustrations. The principal proposition which the lectures were meant to enforce—namely, the dependence of the power of landscape-art upon human

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Correspondence of William Connor Magee*, by J. C. Macdonnell, 1896, vol. i. p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> “The Metaphysical Society: a Reunion,” in the *Nineteenth Century*, August 1885.

CHAP. sympathy—is to be found also laid down in *Modern*  
 XI. *Painters*, and it was again the theme of one of Ruskin's final lectures at Oxford. He did not at the time publish this course. "When first I undertook the duties of this professorship," he explained in 1883, "my own personal liking for landscape made me extremely guarded in recommending its study. I only gave three lectures on landscape in six years and I never published them."<sup>1</sup> Another reason was the difficulty of illustrating the lectures. Later improvements, however, in methods of reproduction overcame this obstacle, and in 1897 the lectures were issued to the public with numerous and attractive plates.

During the summer term of 1871 Ruskin had delivered a public lecture which excited more attention, compelling also more opposition, than any of his discourses from the Professorial chair. He had in it a special purpose. The University Galleries contain a fine collection of drawings by Michael Angelo. Ruskin's early admiration for that master had been much modified by later studies and enthusiasms, and he felt that it was part of his duty as Professor of Fine Art to deliver his opinion upon some of the most famous of the University's art-treasures. He decided, accordingly, to deliver a public lecture on Michael Angelo, and in it he embodied some of the notes upon Tintoret which he had intended to expand into a whole course on that painter. The lecture was illustrated by constant reference to drawings in the University Galleries. It was published, as a separate pamphlet, early in the next year, and the Professor's heresies about Michael Angelo excited loud and indignant protest. His fellow-professor at University College, London (Sir Edward Poynter), at once made a spirited reply, alike in defence of Michael Angelo and in condemnation of Ruskin;<sup>2</sup> and when Ruskin was succeeded in the Chair at Oxford by Sir William Blake Richmond, the first lectures of the new Professor were devoted to an elaborate appreciation of Michael Angelo's work in the Sistine Chapel. Burne-Jones, who

<sup>1</sup> *Art of England*, § 156.

<sup>2</sup> Poynter's *Lectures on Art*, ch. ix.

seems to have shown less than his usual sense of humour by taking it all with grand seriousness, was sadly perturbed by this lecture on Michael Angelo and Tintoret; it threatened to interrupt their friendship.<sup>1</sup> But attention should have been paid to the limiting condition on which Ruskin insisted. The reader is to "observe that its business is only to point out what is to be blamed in Michael Angelo, and that it assumes the facts of his power to be generally known." Ruskin referred his readers for the other side to Mr. Tyrwhitt's *Christian Art*; and in a preface contributed by him to that book he again commended Mr. Tyrwhitt's lectures as showing "the most beautiful and just reverence for Michael Angelo," whereas his own lecture "is entirely devoted to examining the modes in which his genius itself failed, and perverted that of other men." Ruskin might have referred for the necessary supplement to his criticisms of Michael Angelo, not only to Mr. Tyrwhitt, but to the passages in his own early chapter on "Imagination Penetrative," which contain so noble a rhapsody upon Michael Angelo's master-works. Ruskin in his preface to Mr. Tyrwhitt's book speaks of himself further as a "miner" discerning the master's faults; and perhaps something should be allowed, in reading the lecture, to the miner's temptation of exaggerating the significance of his finds, as also to the lecturer's love of startling paradox. Sir William Richmond has a charmingly characteristic reminiscence of Ruskin in this connexion. Among other statements in the lecture, as Sir William recollected it—but not as Ruskin wrote it—was the assertion that "one lock of hair painted by Tintoretto is worth the whole of the roof of the Sistine Chapel put together." Twelve years later Sir William Richmond resigned the Oxford professorship that Ruskin might be re-elected:—

"I think that this touched him, and he wrote me the sweetest possible letter asking if he might come and dine with me. Nothing could have been more delightful than the evening we passed

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<sup>1</sup> See *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii. p. 18.



CHAP. together, recalling old times and talking only about the subjects  
 XI. concerning which we were in entire agreement, an evening that I shall ever remember to the last; and it was the last time that I saw him. He rose to leave me; turning round, he said, 'Willy, why did you make that violent attack upon me about Michael Angelo?' My answer was, 'Mr. Ruskin, because you wrote nonsense.' 'What did I say?' was the retort. I quoted the sentence, at which, with ample generosity, he took both my hands and said, 'My dear Willy, you are quite right; it was nonsense.' This is a noble instance of his real character."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, however, Ruskin had not said the "nonsense" attributed to him. He set "the waves of hair in a single figure of Tintoret's" against, not "the whole of the roof of the Sistine Chapel," but, "all the folds of unseemly linen" there—which is by no means the same thing. Nobility of character Ruskin had; but it cannot honestly be claimed that he was so repentant of his heresies as Sir William Richmond seems to suggest. His further studies in the Sistine Chapel in the summer of the year following the lecture only confirmed him in the view therein expressed. The real fact has been well expressed by a judicious critic: "We do not ask of S. Francis an impartial judgment of Cæsar, for he was no imperialist. . . . So we must not ask of Ruskin to praise Michael Angelo. He did praise him, and then he turned and smote him. . . . The first movement was one of intellectual consent to admiration of a great figure; the second was the profound revolt of a spirit whose real friends were the meek and humble, against a proud and angry art."<sup>2</sup> In 1872 Ruskin, in the course of

<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin as I knew him," in *St. George*, vol. v. 301.

<sup>2</sup> "Ruskin and his Critics," by D. S. M., in the *Saturday Review*, October 20, 1900. A remark by Ruskin himself may be compared: "Of course the first persons to be consulted on the merit of a picture are those for whom the artist

painted it; with those in after generations who have sympathy with them; one does not ask a Roundhead or a Republican his opinion on the Vandyck at Wilton, nor a Presbyterian minister his impressions of the Sistine Chapel" (Preface to E. T. Cook's *Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*).

the lectures on engraving (*Ariadne Florentina*), returned to the charge:—

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(To MRS. SEVERN.) “ OXFORD, Dec. 7, 1872.—I’m so glad you’re at Mr. [George] Richmond’s, and can love and comfort him a little as you do me. How *I* should have discomfited him to-day. I’ve been going in at M. Angelo with all I know—and was in good trim, and the Prince was there, and a nice University audience, and the lecture went on hotly for an hour and a quarter—and I’m sure M. Angelo’s none the better for it, though I daresay Mr. Richmond will say he’s none the worse. (I should say so, too, for I don’t think he *can* be worse.) But really it *was* interesting, on the early divinity and theology of Botticelli, and I had good illustrations, and everybody seems pleased. I showed the Prince in and out, and he sent afterwards to ask if he might come and see some of the illustrations more quietly.”

Ruskin, it will be seen, enjoyed himself not a little in thus daring, from a place of authority, to attack an established reputation. He had not lost in middle life the boyish spirits which had led him at Rome, thirty years before, to fire appalling heresy under the feet of grave and reverend signiors.<sup>1</sup> Yet all the while Ruskin’s intellectual admiration of Michael Angelo was sincere and enduring, and in an Oxford lecture of 1875 he took occasion to refer to the imagination and inspiration of the master. Men shook their heads at Ruskin’s lecture; but Michael Angelo, as he said, is “great enough to make praise and blame alike necessary, and alike inadequate, in any true record of him.”

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 114.

## CHAPTER XII

### A DARK YEAR

(1871)

*"Te semper anteit sæva Necessitas,  
Clavos trabales et cuneos manu  
Gestans aëna ; nec severus  
Uncus abest, liquidumque plumbum."*—HORACE.

IN every human life there are days or years of black-letter and of red. The final apportioning of good and evil fortune may be just; every right exactly rewarded, and every wrong exactly punished. Yet there is also, as Ruskin wrote, "a startlingly separate or counter ordinance of good and evil,—one to this man, and the other to that,—one at this hour of our lives, and the other at that,—ordinance which is entirely beyond our control; and of which the providential law, hitherto, defies investigation."

#### I

Ruskin was writing thus on New Year's Day 1872, and looking back over his fortunes in 1871, found an example near at hand:—

"Throughout the year which ended this morning, I have been endeavouring, more than hitherto in any equal period, to act for others more than for myself: and looking back on the twelve months, am satisfied that in some measure I have done right. So far as I am sure of that, I see also, even already, definitely proportioned fruit, and clear results following from that course;—consequences simply in accordance with the unfailing and undecivable Law of Nature. That it has chanced to me, in the course of the same year, to have to sustain the most acute mental pain

yet inflicted on my life; to pass through the most nearly mortal illness;—and to write your Christmas letter beside my mother's dead body, are appointments merely of the hidden Fors, or Destiny, whose power I mean to trace for you in past history, being hitherto, in the reasons of it, indecipherable, yet palpably following certain laws of storm, which are in the last degree wonderful and majestic.”<sup>1</sup>

It was a year of varied and unselfish activity in Ruskin's life, as he had resolved that it should be:—

(To DR. JOHN SIMON.) “DENMARK HILL, 31st Dec. 1870.—MY DEAR BROTHER JOHN,—You will get this to-morrow morning (perhaps to-night); whenever it does reach you, I trust it may give you some pleasure in my acknowledgment with the deepest thankfulness of the great love you bear me, and the noble example you set me in all things. I begin this next year in the fixed purpose of executing—at least of beginning the fulfilment of—many designs, long in my mind, up to such point as I may. I trust that, except in times of illness, I shall not be a burden to you any more by complaint or despondency, that sometimes I may amuse you a little, sometimes gravely please you, and always be thought of by you as loving you in a very true and deep way, though much frost-bitten in soul as well as body, winter and summer, and in New Years as Old.”

The resolutions were faithfully kept. In January 1871 Ruskin had commenced the series of monthly letters called *Fors Clavigera*, into which he poured the impatience of his soul at the evils of the world and the thoughts, long in his mind, for a new and a better order. In this connexion he started his “St. George's Fund,” devoting to the public purposes thereby intended a tithe of his available fortune. He gave time and money to service on the Mansion House Committee which had been formed to send help to Paris then besieged. He allocated another large portion of his resources to enriching his Art Collection at Oxford and to endowing a Drawing Mastership in connexion with it. He spent much time in arranging his Examples there. His formal lectures were few, for the year was one, not only of

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 13.



CHAP. grief and illness, but of domestic upheavals and the breaking  
XII. of old ties.

## II

In April his cousin, Joan, was married to Mr. Arthur Severn, youngest son of "Keats' Severn." Though the separation was only to be a short one, the departure of his cousin was a heavy loss to Ruskin, and soon after it he returned home one day to find his old nurse lying dead. Next to that of father and mother, he wrote afterwards, there was no loss which he felt so much as this of "Anne, my father's nurse and mine."<sup>1</sup> "She was one of our many," he adds—one of love's *meinie* in the household at Denmark Hill; and though she was somewhat of a tyrant, and even according to Ruskin's mother "possessed by the Devil," Ruskin felt for her something of the clinging affection which Stevenson has expressed so beautifully in the dedication of his *Child's Garland of Verse* to "My second mother, my first wife." The strength of Ruskin's mother was beginning to fail; and he had further anxiety in the illness of Mrs. Severn from rheumatic fever. As soon as she was able to join him, she did so with her husband. They found him at Matlock Bath, where he had gone for a summer holiday. It was a cold, wet July. Ruskin, up with the sun as ever, was painting a spray of wild rose for his Oxford School.<sup>2</sup> He caught a chill, and a severe attack of internal inflammation intervened. He was a difficult patient—refusing what the doctors ordered, and insisting on dieting himself ("forcing them," he wrote to a friend, "to give me cold roast beef and mustard at two o'clock in the morning"); but he had affectionate nursing from Mrs. Severn and Lady Mount-Temple, and Dr. Acland, who was in professional attendance, probably found means of controlling, while humouring, the patient. To his friend and physician Ruskin, immediately on recovery, sent the following letter of thanks:—

"DENMARK HILL, 5th August, '71.—MY DEAR HENRY,—I was glad to have your letter, beginning myself to get anxious about

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. i. § 31.

<sup>2</sup> No. 238 in the Rudimentary Series.

*you*, knowing well how much among other things you had been tired by my illness. I am afraid the cheque enclosed will not cover the mere loss of your time, and your kindness I would not, you well know, think of valuing in ways like this. I am thankful you are resting at Holnicote. I cannot answer for my own movements at all until I am less anxious about my mother; but she is better since I came home. I knew very thoroughly how ill I was; I have not been so near the dark gates since I was a child. But I knew also, better than anybody else could, how strong the last fibres and coils of anchor were; and though I clearly recognised the danger, should have been much surprised to have found myself dying. I did not quite know how frightened all of you were, or I would have comforted you. I am now going to attend to my health as the principal thing, until I can lie down in Coniston Water."

CHAP.  
XII.

Ruskin had in fact been perilously near to death. The anxiety which his friends had felt on his account appears in a subsequent letter from Carlyle:—

"CHELSEA, 21 *October*, 1871.—DEAR RUSKIN,—I cannot explain to myself the strange, and indeed lamentable, fact that I have not seen you, or heard a distinct word from you, for, I think, seven or eight months. It is a fact that has become not only surprising to me, but distressing, and the source latterly of continual anxieties both about myself and you. For three months I had no amanuensis (I in the Highlands; Mary in Dumfries-shire, far away), and without a hand could not write to you myself; about the middle of that period, too, there came the most alarming rumours of your illness at Matlock, and both Lady Ashburton and myself (especially the latter party, for whom I can answer best) were in a state really deserving pity on your account, till the very newspapers took compassion on us, and announced the immediate danger to be past. . . . Froude has returned, and is often asking about you; as indeed are many others, to whom the radiant qualities which the gods have given you, and set you to work with in such an *element*, are not unknown. Write me a word at once, dear Ruskin. . . ."

The illness at Matlock seems to have been physical only;

CHAP. and dreams which visited Ruskin, unlike those in his later  
XII. illnesses, helped his recovery and gave him strength in future work. One was of Venice, where he saw the bronze horses of St. Mark's putting on their harness. Another was of St. Peter's, at Rome, and of false priests performing ceremonies of dead religion; and the third was of prisoners who were to be ransomed by money. The dreamer said he had no money. "Yes, answered the prisoner, I had some that belonged to me as a brother of St. Francis, if I would give it up. I said they were welcome to whatever I had, and then I heard the voice of an Italian woman singing, and I have never heard such divine singing before nor since":—

"Now these three dreams," he continues, "have, every one of them, been of much use to me since; or so far as they have failed to be useful, it has been my own fault, and not theirs; but the chief use of them at the time was to give me courage and confidence in myself, both in bodily distress, of which I had still not a little to bear; and worse, much mental anxiety about matters supremely interesting to me, which were turning out ill. And through all such trouble—which came upon me as I was recovering, as if it meant to throw me back into the grave—I held out and recovered, repeating always to myself, or rather having always murmured in my ears, at every new trial, one Latin line,

'Tu ne cede malis, sed contra fortior ito.'"<sup>1</sup>

The dreams in their helpfulness need no further interpretation than is supplied by Ruskin's own warfare, teaching, and self-sacrifices. The "acute mental pain" which followed his illness at Matlock was the bitterness of his romance. But against this trial also the words of the Cumæan Sibyl armed him with power to work.

### III

On recovery from his illness, Ruskin planned to "lie down in Coniston Water." Among the recollections of early

<sup>1</sup> So cited by Ruskin (*Ariadne Florentina*, § 214), but Virgil wrote *audentior*.

years which crowded in upon him during his illness was one which "Fors" was presently to drive in with the hammer of fortunate occurrence :—

"I weary for the fountain foaming,  
For shady holm and hill ;  
My mind is on the mountain roaming,  
My spirit's voice is still. . . .  
I weary for the heights that look  
Adown upon the dale.  
The crags are lone on Coniston. . . ."

So he had written as a boy, and now it seemed to him that only by the shores of that deep-bosomed lake could he find peace and refreshment. At the very moment W. J. Linton, the poet and wood-engraver, was seeking a purchaser for his house, Brantwood, on the eastern side of Coniston Water, with ten acres of copse-wood rising steeply up the fell. Linton had entered into occupation of it in 1852, and there he set up a printing-press for the production of his periodical, entitled *The English Republic*, an organ "to explain Republican Principles, to record Republican Progress, and to establish a Republican Party in England." A little later the estate was extended. "My sheep-feeding on the fell above entitled me," adds Linton, "when the common land between Coniston Water and Esthwaite Water was enclosed, to an apportionment of six acres, mostly covered with heather and juniper, so that I had sixteen acres instead of ten to sell." Ruskin no sooner heard of the opportunity than he seized it. Linton was now in America, and "the purchase of Brantwood was pleasantly arranged," he says, "in a couple of letters."<sup>1</sup> The price paid by Ruskin was £1500. As soon as he was sufficiently convalescent he went to inspect his new possession. It delighted him greatly :—

(To MRS. SEVERN.) "14th September, Evening.—Anything so splendid in the way of golden and blue birds as the pheasant I put up at my own wicket-gate to the moors out of my own heather, was never seen except in my own Joanie's own pheasant drawing that

<sup>1</sup> *Memories*, by W. J. Linton, 1895, pp. 97, 132, 166.



CHAP. she's never asked after this age.<sup>1</sup> My wrist is stiff with rowing ;  
 XII. I've rowed full six miles to-day, besides scrambling up the bed of a stream holding on by the heather, and, more than I cared for, juniper bushes, which is exercise also. There certainly is a special fate in my getting this house. The man from whom I buy it—Linton—wanted to found a 'republic,' printed a certain number of numbers of the *Republic* like my *Fors Clavigera* ! and his printing-press is still in one of the outhouses, and 'God and the People' scratched deep in the whitewash outside. Well, it won't be a 'republican centre' now, but whether the landed men round will like my Toryism better than his Republicanism, remains to be seen. . . . For the house itself ! Well, there is a house, certainly, and it has rooms in it, but I believe in reality nearly as much will have to be done as if it were a shell of bricks and mortar."

As for the view, "anything so lovely" he "had not seen since he was on the Lago Maggiore." Having inspected the domain and given the necessary orders for its being put into repair, Ruskin went to Scotland to visit his friends the Hilliards, who were staying at Abbeythune. He spent two days at Melrose, and then, as he notes in his diary, "by Gala Water, Edinburgh, Stirling, Perth, Dundee to Arbroath by moonlight" (Sept. 25). He stayed a week with his friends, enjoying the sea air, and then returned for a few days to Coniston, afterwards stopping on the way south at Lichfield.

#### IV

Ruskin's little journey in the north had completed his convalescence, and he was intending to lecture at Oxford during the October term, but the increasing failure of his mother's health caused him daily anxiety, and he was compelled to relinquish the idea. The dangerous illness of her son had hastened her decline, and on December 5 the end came:—

(To W. H. HARRISON.) "DENMARK HILL, Dec. 6th, '71.—Your old friend passed away at a quarter after two yesterday

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<sup>1</sup> That is, a drawing which Ruskin was doing for Mrs Severn.

afternoon. You have every cause of happy thought respecting her, believing her to be now where she would like best to be, and having nothing but love and kindness rendered to her in life, to look back upon, on your part. I have not by any means your certainty on the first head, and find myself more repentant than I ever expected to be, for the contrary of love and kindness rendered to her. I fancied I knew pretty well how I should feel at the end, often putting it to myself. But I am much more surprised at the new look of things in the twilight than I was after the sun had set for my father."

(To H. W. ACLAND.) "*December 6th.*—You would like better to see my mother now than when you last sate beside her. She reminds me altogether of what she was when she taught me the Sermon on the Mount, and two or three things more, not useless to me: and her hand lies on her breast as prettily as if Mino of Fésolé had cut it, and it is very pretty, though so thin. The last days were very cruel. I am glad no members of the Metaphysical saw them, of the Huxley side, lest they should be afraid to speak without hurting me. For, indeed, the sinking of all back to the bleak Mechanism was difficult to bear the sight of. Absolute unconsciousness at last, with aspect of restless pain."

Ruskin's mother was ninety when she died. She was laid to rest beside her husband whom she trusted to see again—"not to be near him," she had said, "not to be so high in heaven, but content if she might only *see* him"; and in after years Ruskin added to the inscription on the monument which he had designed for his father this tribute to his mother:—

Here  
Beside my father's body  
I have laid;  
My mother's;  
Nor was dearer earth  
Ever returned to earth,  
Nor purer life  
Recorded in heaven.

He desired to leave another monument to the memory of

CHAP. his mother, whose Christian name was Margaret, and whose  
 XII. early home had been at Croydon. In 1876 he restored a spring of water between Croydon and Epsom, and erected a tablet over it, bearing the following words: "In obedience to the Giver of Life, of the brooks and fruits that feed it, of the peace that ends it, may this Well be kept sacred for the service of men, flocks, and flowers, and be by kindness called MARGARET'S WELL. This pool was beautified and endowed by John Ruskin, Esq., M.A., LL.D." His project, however, failed. The stream was again fouled by the action of the local authorities; the inscription was taken down;<sup>1</sup> and though at the close of 1880 we find him again reverting to the subject in his diary and proposing a fresh inscription,<sup>2</sup> nothing now remains to record his attempt. Amongst Ruskin's papers some letters were found at his death which he had put into type and docketed as intended for use in future parts of his Autobiography. They included this from his mother:—

"DENMARK HILL, *August 23rd*, 1869.—MY DEAREST,—I should be thankful to pay you with double interest the more than comfort and pleasure I have had, and I think latterly more than at any former times, from your letters. I have had some experience of one of your large grasshoppers, and have no desire to have anything more to do with such acquaintance. I dislike the insect tribe altogether, except as they excite my deep reverence towards the Life sustaining them. I am glad you come by Dijon. I am thankful for your joy in moss and flowers of humble growth, and am somewhat impatient to see all your pictures under your own care.<sup>3</sup> I am more than delighted to find you resemble St. Carlo Borromeo; have you the old picture you bought formerly? I am told John Ruskin Simson<sup>4</sup> shows decided picture-estimating

<sup>1</sup> The tablet was at one time re-erected by a purchaser in a neighbouring garden.

<sup>2</sup> "1880, *Nov.* 30.—I thought of my mother's memorial again: 'This Spring, in memory of a maid's life as pure, and a mother's love as ceaseless, dedicate to a

spirit in peace, is called by Croydon people Margaret's Well. *Matris animæ Joannes Ruskin: 1880.*'"

<sup>3</sup> Instead of only her own, and Lucy Tovey's, at Denmark Hill. [J. R.]

<sup>4</sup> The son of Mrs. Severn's sister Kate; he died young.

talent. I trust I may be able to see in some way what you have been employed about. As I have written, I have always read <sup>1</sup> *your* letters myself. I am reading your *Queen of the Air* with more and more deep sense of its merit. *Ethics of the Dust* is becoming to me more what it ought always to have been. Dr. Acland is sweet and good, and Angy <sup>2</sup> also. Joanna will, I hope, manage very nicely. Cousin George <sup>3</sup> is good and kind, and regards you entirely, and is decidedly clever; I *think* talented and upright. A sad<sup>1</sup>, blundered scrawl I send.<sup>4</sup> Joan sends love, and wrote yesterday to Berne.—I am, my dearest, with a thousand thanks for all the pains you have taken to give me pleasure and save me anxiety, always your affectionate Mother,

MARGARET RUSKIN."

Another document which Ruskin set aside for use in *Præterita* is the following letter from Carlyle—beautiful and characteristic—written on the mother's death:—

"CHELSEA, 6 Dec., 1871.—My heart is sore for you in these dreary moments. A great change has befallen; irrevocable, inexorable,—the lot of all the world since it was first made, and yet so strangely original, as it were miraculous, to each of us, when it comes home to himself. The Wearied one has gone to her welcome Rest; and to you there is a strange, regretful, mournful desolation, in looking before and back;—to all of us the loss of our Mother is a new epoch in our Life-pilgrimage, now fallen lonelier and sterner than it ever seemed before.—I cannot come to you; nor would it be proper or permissible, for reasons evident. But I beg you very much to come to me at any hour, and let me see you for a little, after those sad and solemn duties now fallen to you are performed. Believe always that my heart's sympathies are with you, and that I love you well."

<sup>1</sup> Her sight now beginning to grow dim. See following notice of its injury in her youth by too fine needlework. [J. R.—but this was not written—E. T. C.]

<sup>2</sup> Acland's daughter.

<sup>3</sup> William the chess-player's son, by his first wife—nearly as

strong a player as his father, of whom, with his sister, more hereafter. [J. R.]

<sup>4</sup> "Altogether" had been "all-together"—the "all" is scratched out; the second *n* blotted in Joanna. [J. R.]



CHAP.  
XII.

The loving trust which the mother placed in the son was shown by her will, made immediately before her death: "I leave all I have to my son." An honour, which came to Ruskin at the end of the year, perhaps pleased his mother in her last days. He was elected Lord Rector of St. Andrews University by 86 votes against 79 given for Lord Lytton. It was presently discovered, however, that by the Scottish Universities Act of 1858 any one holding a professorship at a British University was disqualified for a Lord Rectorship. Lord Neaves was chosen instead, and the students missed a Rectorial Address from Ruskin. He had selected as his subject "The definition of Heroism, and its function in Scotland at this day."

## V

Deeply though Ruskin felt his mother's death, he conceded nothing to idle sorrow. "To-day" was his life's motto, and so soon as his mother was laid to rest he threw himself into the tasks and duties of the world around him. The newspapers had been complaining of the dirty state of the London streets, and it occurred to Ruskin that a modern instance of cleansing Augean stables might appropriately become the first labour of St. George. Not improbably the idea suggested itself to him in thoughts about his mother. "I inherited to the full," he says, "my mother's love of tidiness and cleanliness; so that quite one of the most poetical charms of Switzerland to me, next to her white snows, was her white sleeves." And one of his most soothing memories was of practice in the gospel of cleanliness:—

"The quite happiest bit of manual work I ever did was for my mother in the old inn at Sixt, where she alleged the stone staircase to have become unpleasantly dirty, since last year. Nobody in the inn appearing to think it possible to wash it, I brought the necessary buckets of water from the yard myself, poured them into beautiful image of Versailles waterworks down the fifteen or twenty steps of the great staircase, and with the strongest broom I could find, cleaned every step into its corners. It was quite lovely work

to dash the water and drive the mud, from each, with accumulating splash down to the next one.”<sup>1</sup>

CHAP.  
XII.

He explained his present proposal in a letter from Utopia to the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Dec. 28, 1871):—

“SIR, . . . The Utopians have the oddest way of carrying out things, when once they begin, as far as they can go ; and it occurred to them one dirty December long since, when they, like us, had only crossing-sweepers, that they might just as well sweep the whole of the street as the crossings of it, so that they might cross anywhere. Of course that meant more work for the sweepers ; but the Utopians have always hands enough for whatever work is to be done in the open air ;—they appointed a due number of brooms-men to every quarter of the town ; and since then, at any time of the year, it is in our little town as in great Rotterdam when Doctor Brown saw it on his journey from Norwich to Colen in 1668, ‘the women go about in white slippers,’ which is pretty to see. Now, Sir, it would, of course, be more difficult to manage anything like this in London . . . ; but still it is certain we can at least anywhere do as much for the whole street, as we have done for the crossing ; and to show that we can, I mean, on 1st January next, to take three street-sweepers into constant service ; they will be the first workpeople I employ with the interest of the St. George’s fund, of which I shall get my first dividend this January ; and, whenever I can get leave from the police and inhabitants, I will keep my three sweepers steadily at work for eight hours a day ; and I hope soon to show you a bit of our London streets kept as clean as the deck of a ship of the line.”

Ruskin was as good as his word. He obtained permission from the local authority of St. Giles’s, and in January his brigade was set to work. Ruskin wielded the broom himself for a start ; put on his gardener, Downs, as foreman of the job ; and often drove round with his friends to inspect the work. The intention was to exhibit a piece of constantly clean roadway and pavement, without leaving so much as a bit of orange-peel on the footway or an

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. §§ 23, 197.

CHAP. XII. egg-shell in the gutter. "I failed," he says, "partly because I chose too difficult a district to begin with (the contributions of transitional mud being constant, and the inhabitants passive), but chiefly because I could no more be on the spot myself, to give spirit to the men, when I left Denmark Hill for Coniston." Also a young rogue of a crossing-sweeper who was one of the brigade turned truant. And so the enterprise was abandoned; but sometimes when I find a piece of London road which is better swept owing to the quickened zeal of our municipal authorities, I seem to see the figure of Ruskin with his broom among the workers.

His diary shows that he carefully numbered and took stock of his labourers, making notes of their habits, earnings and spendings. "It became a question for how much one of them could get a pair of boots. And I found the conditions under which the boots were to be got were always that some intermediate person should answer for the payment to the bootmaker. The price of the boots was then to be paid by instalments to the intermediate person, and in the result the street-sweeper paid sixpence more for his boots." Ruskin's next experiment, therefore, was in the character of salesman—not, however, of boots, but of tea. His shop was opened in 1874 at 29 Paddington Street, near his Marylebone property. The painting of the sign—"Mr. Ruskin's Tea-shop"—which caused him (he tells us) some months of artistic indecision,<sup>1</sup> was ultimately undertaken by Mr. Arthur Severn. Ruskin "resolutely refused to compete with neighbouring tradesmen either in gas or rhetoric"; and it is to be doubted whether the absence of these allurements was compensated for by the set of fine old china, bought at Siena, with which he dressed his shop-window. Two old servants of his mother's, Harriet and Lucy Tovey, were installed as shopwomen, and when, two years later, Harriet died, the shop was abandoned. The experiment had a useful purpose. Ruskin's object was to sell pure tea only—a matter in which, as a confirmed tea-drinker, he was somewhat of a connoisseur; and also

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 48.

to sell it in packets as small as poor customers chose to buy, without making a profit on the subdivision—a very important point in the domestic economy of the poor, especially at times of alteration in the tea-duty. When I hear of larger, and more successful undertakings on the same basis, I seem to see Ruskin behind the counter; and I recall a practice which was to prevail in the Utopia of his master: “For, if I may venture to say a ridiculous thing, if we were to compel the best men everywhere to keep taverns for a time, to carry on retail trade, or do anything of that sort: or if, in consequence of some necessity, the best women were compelled to take to a similar calling, then we should know how agreeable and pleasant all these things are. And if they were carried on according to pure reason, all such occupations would be held in honour.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Laws*, xi. 918 (Jowett’s translation).



## CHAPTER XIII

BOTTICELLI

(1872, 1873)

“To us this star or that seems bright,  
And oft some headlong meteor’s flight  
Holds for awhile our raptured sight.  
But he discerns each noble star;  
The least is only the most far,  
Whose worlds, may be, the mightiest are.”—R. L. O.

### I

THE death of his mother decided Ruskin to give up the Denmark Hill house, and to transfer his possessions to Oxford or Brantwood. Mr. and Mrs. Severn had been established in the old home at Herne Hill, where Ruskin’s nursery was always kept as a sanctum for him when staying in London. The departure from Denmark Hill was a severe wrench to him. “Increasing despondency on me,” he wrote in his diary (January 11, 1872), “as time for leaving draws near.” “I write my morning date for the last time in my old study” (March 28). The next entry is at Oxford: “29 March, 1872. Good Friday. In my college rooms, having finally left my old home. I open at and read the 39th of Ezekiel, and, secondly, by equal chance, at the 16th Psalm.” These *Sortes Biblicæ* may be taken as declaring the spirit of the work which he had now been set free to resume at Oxford. “Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog”; what was this but Ruskin’s mission? “I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel”; is not this the spirit in which he discoursed upon the heavenly wisdom in *The Eagle’s Nest*? He had at first proposed for his next lectures three more on Landscape and then three on

Fishes. He had been working on the classification of fishes and their artistic "points" somewhat fully, as his note-books show, and the course on fishes was to have been a particularly good one. "I'm very anxious," he wrote to Acland (December 22, 1871), "to have the Dean at them, if possible. The fish ones are not to have any jests, but to be real work all through." When it came to the point, however, the subject of fishes was put aside, and Ruskin opened his work at Oxford for the year 1872 with a longer series on the relations of Science and Art. Each of these lectures was delivered twice—first to the University and then again to a general audience. They were published as *The Eagle's Nest*; a notice of them may more conveniently be given in a later chapter (XXIV.).

## II

After the double delivery of these ten lectures, with work still continuing on the arrangement of the Art Collection, Ruskin determined to seek relaxation in change of study in Italy, where also he might gather material for future lectures. He was accompanied on this occasion by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, and also by Mr. Albert Goodwin, in whose then rising talent he took the liveliest interest, and to whom he rendered many offices of friendly counsel and assistance. At Pisa Ruskin made several sketches for his Oxford schools, and observations which left their mark in a subsequent course of lectures (*Val d'Arno*). The exquisite Chapel of the Thorn, which he had first sketched in 1840, was now being "restored," and the cross of marble in one of the arch-spandrils was dashed to pieces before his eyes, while he was drawing it. "It was some comfort to me," he wrote, "to watch the workman's ashamed face, as he struck the old marble to pieces. Stolidly and languidly he dealt the blows,—down-looking,—so far as in any wise sensitive, ashamed."<sup>1</sup> At Lucca he noted "Chapel of Rose destroyed, as of Thorn at Pisa" (May 1). Similarly from Lucca he wrote to Mr. Macdonald (May 4): "Two of my favourite

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 20.

CHAP. buildings in Italy have been destroyed within the last two  
XIII. years, and I am working day and night (or at least early morning) to save a few things I shall never see again." He rose sometimes, as entries in his diary show, before four in the morning; for in addition to his sketching, he was busy with correcting various books for the press, and in writing "Instructions" for his Drawing School. The scenery and peasant-life of the hills and valleys between Pisa and Lucca remained much in his mind. He described them at the time in *Fors*, and again many years later in the *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*:—

"All glens among those marble mountains are nearly alike: vine and olive below, chestnut higher up, pasture and cornfield between woods of stone-pine on the crests: and there is no more beautiful scene, nor, to my thinking, any other scene in the world pregnant with historical interest so singular, as that from the meadowy ridge of the Monte Pisano, with Pisa at your feet on one side,—her Baptistery and Campo Santo minutely clear, like the little carved models she sells of them,—and Lucca, like a mural crown fallen among the fields of the Val di Serchio on the other: and all the Riviera di Levante, as far as Chiavari, purple between the burning bays of the Gulph of Genoa.<sup>1</sup> . . . I was looking over all this from under the rim of a large bell [at Lucca Cathedral], beautifully embossed, with a St. Sebastian upon it, and some lovely thin-edged laurel leaves, and an inscription saying that the people should be filled with the fat of the land, if they listened to the voice of the Lord. . . . The laurel leaves on the bell were so finely hammered that I felt bound to have a ladder set against the lip of it, that I might examine them more closely; and the sacristan and bell-ringer were so interested in this proceeding that they got up, themselves, on the cross-beams, and sat like two jackdaws, looking on, one on each side; for which expression of sympathy I was deeply grateful, and offered the bell-ringer, on the spot, two bank-notes for tenpence each. But they were so rotten with age, and so brittle and black with tobacco, that, having unadvisedly folded them up small in my purse, the patches on their backs had run

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<sup>1</sup> "Notes on the Life of S. Zita."

their corners through them, and they came out tattered like so much tinder. The bell-ringer looked at them hopelessly, and gave me them back. I promised him some better patched ones, and folded the remnants of tinder up carefully, to be kept at Coniston (where we have still a tenpenceworth or so of copper,—though no olive oil)—for specimens of the currency of the new Kingdom of Italy. . . .

“Yet the peasant race, at least, of the Val di Niévole are not unblest; if honesty, kindness, food sufficient for them, and peace of heart, can anywise make up for poverty in current coin. Only the evening before last, I was up among the hills to the south of Lucca, close to the remains of the country-house of Castruccio Castracani . . . where no English ever dream of going, being altogether lovely and at rest, and the country life in them unchanged; and I had several friends with me, and a young girl scrambling about among the vines, lost a pretty little cross of Florentine work. Luckily, she had made acquaintance, only the day before, with the peasant mistress of a cottage close by, and with her two youngest children, Adam and Eve. Eve was still tied up tight in swaddling clothes, down to the toes, and carried about as a bundle; but Adam was old enough to run about; and found the cross, and his mother gave it us back next day.

“Not unblest, such a people, though with some common human care and kindness you might bless them a little more. If only you would not curse them; but the curse of your modern life is fatally near, and only for a few years more, perhaps, they will be seen—driving their tawny kine, or with their sheep following them,—to pass, like pictures in enchanted motion, among their glades of vine.”<sup>1</sup>

The passage is very characteristic of Ruskin's style and method in *Fors Clavigera*, though in shortening it I have had to omit some of the quick-glancing play of his allusiveness. At Lucca, as at Pisa, he made many drawings which are now at Oxford. But, as ever with him, the more he did the more he grieved at what had to be left undone. “My life flying like a dream,” he says in his diary (Lucca, May 3); and so a little later at Rome, “days flying like the

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 18.



CHAP. dust in the wind." Yet at Rome, as at Florence, Perugia,  
XIII. and Assisi, he worked incessantly and constantly, noting new impressions, or connecting in new ways the results of his observation. His chief artistic interest at Rome on this occasion was the work of Botticelli in the Sistine Chapel. "I am very glad," he wrote to Acland (Siena, May 27), "I said what I did in my lecture on M. Angelo.<sup>1</sup> The Sistine roof is one of the sorrowfullest pieces of affectation and abused power that have ever misled the world. Its state is better than I expected, its colour good. But it is, in pure fact, a series of devices for exhibition of legs and arms, with a great deal of fine feeling used to disguise the intent." The earlier masters wholly delighted him:—

"(ROME), *May 17*.—Yesterday early out to St. Peter's; found glorious Moses by Perugino, and little dog of Sandro Botticelli."

"(PERUGIA).—I am wofully forgetting the lovely Sandro of the Vatican. Moses at the Burning Bush twice over—pulling his shoes and stockings off, in middle of picture; action repeated by Perugino in the Baptism. Below, he is leading his family away from Jethro's house, his staff in his hand; the infinitely wonderful little dog is carried, with the bundle, by the eldest boy; its sharp nose and living paws marvellously foreshortened."

From Rome and Tuscany Ruskin and his friends went to Verona, where he wrote a monograph on the Cavalli Monuments for the Arundel Society, and then to Venice, where he made further study of Carpaccio.

Artistic work, however, in writing, in studying, in drawing, occupied but half of his thoughts and time. He had his monthly letter to write as well, and he carried in his mind his schemes for St. George's Guild. A passage in *Fors* recalls it. There had been a heavy thunder-shower in Verona in the early afternoon, and Ruskin walked at evening with his friends to see the sun set clear over the mountains:—

"The evening drew on, and two peasants who had been cutting hay on a terrace of meadow among the rocks, left their work, and

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<sup>1</sup> In the lecture given in June 1871; see above, p. 210.

came to look at the sketchers, and make out, if they could, what we wanted on their ground. . . . Some talk followed, of cold and heat, and anything else one knew the Italian for, or could understand the Veronese for (Veronese being more like Spanish than Italian); and I praised the country, as was just, or at least as I could, and said I should like to live there. Whereupon he commended it also, in measured terms; and said the wine was good. ‘But the water?’ I asked, pointing to the dry river-bed. The water was bitter, he said, and little wholesome. ‘Why, then, have you let all that thunder-shower go down the Adige, three hours ago?’ ‘That was the way the showers came.’ ‘Yes, but not the way they ought to go. . . . If you had ever been at the little pains of throwing half-a-dozen yards of wall here, from rock to rock, you would have had, at this moment, a pool of standing water as big as a mill-pond, kept out of that thunder-shower, which very water, to-morrow morning, will probably be washing away somebody’s hay-stack into the Po.’ The above was what I wanted to say; but didn’t know the Italian for hay-stack. I got enough out to make the farmer understand what I meant. Yes, he said, that would be very good, but ‘la spesa?’ ‘The expense! What would be the expense to you of gathering a few stones from this hillside? And the idle minutes, gathered out of a week, if a neighbour or two joined in the work, could do all the building.’ He paused at this—the idea of neighbours joining in work appearing to him entirely abortive, and untenable by a rational being. Which indeed, throughout Christendom, it at present is,—thanks to the beautiful instructions and orthodox catechisms impressed by the two great sects of Evangelical and Papal pardoners on the minds of their respective flocks. . . . Neither have *I* ever thought of, far less seriously proposed, such a monstrous thing as that neighbours should help one another; but I *have* proposed, and do solemnly still propose, that people who have got no neighbours, but are outcasts and Samaritans, as it were, should put whatever twopenny charity they can afford into useful unity of action; and that, caring personally for no one, practically for every one, they should undertake ‘la spesa’ of work that will pay no dividend on their twopences; but will both produce and pour oil and wine where they are most wanted.” (Letter 19.)

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XIII.

On his return to England Ruskin had a brief period of exceptional happiness—soon, however, to be yet more darkly clouded over. A few entries in his diary tell of his peace of mind :—

“13th August, 1872, Tuesday, BROADLANDS.—Entirely calm and clear morning. The mist from the river at rest among the trees, with rosy light on its folds of blue, and I, for the first time these ten years, happy. Took up Renan’s *St. Paul* as I was dressing, and read a little ; a piece of epistle in smaller type caught my eye as I was closing the book : *Grâce à Dieu pour son ineffable don.*”

“17th August, HERNE HILL.—Oh me, that ever such thought and rest should be granted me once more.”

“18th August, Sunday.—In the morning, in church at Toft,<sup>1</sup> beside R. Now at the corner of a room in the Euston Square hotel, altogether miserable. Going to bed, I take up the inn table New Testament. It opens at ‘A little while, and ye shall not see Me ; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.’”

The clouds, however, soon descended, and Ruskin sought relief, as was ever his way, in hard work. On September 13 he took possession of Brantwood, which was now ready for his occupation, and he had Oxford lectures on Engraving to prepare. These were duly delivered during November and December.

### III

The lectures were published in separate parts at irregular intervals between 1873 and 1876 ; the later lectures being rewritten at Assisi in 1874, after Ruskin’s further study in that year of Botticelli’s work at Rome (Chap. XIV.). The fragmentary nature of some of the book is sufficiently confessed by the author. “The Appendix,” he says, “is a mass of loose notes which need a very sewing machine to bring together—and any one of these that I take in hand leads me into ashamed censorship of the imperfection of all I have

<sup>1</sup> Toft Hall, Cheshire, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Leycester, whom Ruskin had met at Broad-

lands, and who were ever after among the most valued friends of Ruskin and Brantwood.

been able to say about engraving.”<sup>1</sup> The fact is that on this subject, as on nearly every other which Ruskin touched, his sayings are scattered throughout his Works.<sup>2</sup> The title originally announced for the lectures was “Sandro Botticelli and the Florentine Schools of Engraving.” They were called when printed *Ariadne Florentina: Six Lectures on Wood and Metal Engraving*. Botticelli is one of the five painters whose excellency Ruskin claimed to have interpreted to the world;<sup>3</sup> and the modern cult of Botticelli owes much to his enthusiasm, but something must be allowed also to the essay of Pater (first published in the *Fortnightly Review*, August 1870; reprinted in *Studies in the Renaissance*, 1873). An essay of Swinburne’s and the talk of Rossetti<sup>4</sup> had also some weight in the matter. Ruskin’s first mention of Botticelli was in an Oxford lecture of 1871.<sup>5</sup> Carpaccio had been proclaimed in a lecture of the preceding year, and it became a standing joke among the profane to ask who was Ruskin’s last “greatest painter.” It was in answer thereto that a disciple wrote the lines which I have placed at the head of this chapter. Ruskin had come back from Rome and Florence after his tour of 1872 full of Botticelli, and in his Oxford lectures he took the work of that artist, together with Holbein’s, as the standards of engraving. And here an important explanation must be made. Ruskin followed Vasari in attributing to Botticelli a share in all the engraved plates commonly ascribed to Baldini. Later research, however, has rejected this theory altogether. Even the existence of Baldini is held to be uncertain; Botticelli’s share in any of the plates ascribed to Baldini is not generally accepted; and the plates, formerly ascribed to him collectively, are now commonly assorted into different schools and manners. Ruskin laid no claim to what the French call *expertise*. “My readers,” he says,

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 60.

<sup>2</sup> See the article “Engraving” in the Index to the Library Edition.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Swinburne’s “Notes on Designs of the Old Masters at Flor-

ence” (reprinted in *Essays and Studies*) had appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, July 1868. For Rossetti, see W. M. Rossetti’s *D. G. Rossetti: Letters and Memoir*, vol. i. p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> *Lectures on Landscape*, § 10.



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"may trust me to tell them what is well done or ill; but by whom, is quite a separate question . . . not at all bearing on my objects in teaching."<sup>1</sup> And so, in *Ariadne*, he says in the Appendix, "whatever is said in the previous pages of the plates chosen for example, by whomsoever done, is absolutely trustworthy." The main purpose of the book is, as the title indicates, to trace "the orders of decorative design, which are especially expressible by engraving," and which belong to "the instincts for the arrangement of pure line in labyrinthine intricacy, through which the grace of order may give continual clue." But moral precepts were always present in Ruskin's mind beside artistic analysis. In his own copy of *Ariadne*, he noted § 27 on the margin as the "cream of the book." The section so noted is that in which he enforces his favourite doctrines that the "didactic and intellectual" qualities distinguish the higher from the lower art; that like is known only of like, and the appreciation of noble art requires some answering quality in the observer; and, further, that the art-power of any individual is in large measure inherited from his race. With these thoughts in his mind, and with his intense sympathy for the work and teaching of Botticelli, Ruskin's treatise became in large part a discourse on lines of conduct, no less than on lines engraved upon wood or steel, and "*Ariadne Florentina*" meant to him, further, the clue which the grace and order and faith of the Florentine masters may be made to afford through the perplexities and pitfalls of the labyrinth of life. But the strictly artistic or scientific part of the book shows Ruskin at his best. "I have read every word of this in my carriage," wrote Dr. John Brown, "dodging about from door to door, from one case to another. Besides being new and true and important—very—this is full of 'go,' 'throughout with the full fire of temper in it.' That dying child! that miserrimus Miser! and all that about anatomy profoundly true."<sup>2</sup> "There is no other book comparable to it," says Professor Norton, "in opening the more recondite sources of interest and enjoyment in the study of the art of engraving, and of its relations to the other arts."

<sup>1</sup> *Mornings in Florence*, § 140.

ture V. of *Ariadne* and woodcuts

<sup>2</sup> The references are to Lec-

of Holbein's there reproduced.

## IV

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XIII.

After delivering the lectures on engraving, Ruskin presently returned home:—

“BRANTWOOD, *Sunday, 28th December*.—Last night the first here; slept sound, and dreamed of teaching some one how to paint angels, and then showing them how angels should be represented as flying to music.”

“1872, *last day of, BRANTWOOD, Tuesday*.—Intensely dark and rainy morning. But I, on the whole, victorious, and ready for new work, and my possessions pleasant to me in my chosen, or appointed, home, and my hand finding its deed.”

The new year began with quiet work:—

“(Jan. 4.)—The two first days of the year spent actively on rush blossom and paper cones.<sup>1</sup> (Jan. 20.)—Books and coins all being ordered and catalogued as fast as may be.”

“(Jan. 26.)—Worked well at Miracles and coins.”

“8 *February* [his birthday].—Opened at Ecclesiasticus, 50, 17, reading on to 18, and by chance, 8.<sup>2</sup> I must try to make my daily life more perfect as I grow old. Write this and my Greek notes at seven morning, sans spectacles.”

“(March 31.)—Much tried and depressed last night; better, and with good thoughts of Swallow lecture, this morning, as if by reaction.”

Such entries give us a good glimpse of Ruskin's days of eager work at home; of his studies of leaves and coins; of his writing now for the Metaphysical Society, and now upon Tuscan Art or upon Birds for his Oxford lectures; and of the reverent spirit which consecrated all his laborious days. He went up to London in February to read the paper on Miracles (p. 208), and then to Oxford for his lectures. These were announced as “Three Lectures on English and Greek Birds as the Subjects of Fine Art,” and were given (each of them twice) during March and May; the first on the Robin, the second on the Swallow, and the third

<sup>1</sup> Drawings for the Oxford Collection.

<sup>2</sup> “And as the flower of roses in the spring of the year.”

CHAP. on the Chough. A passage in one of these lectures, in  
XIII. which Ruskin poked fun at the theory of natural selection, caused some stir :—

“We might even sufficiently represent the general manner of conclusion in the Darwinian system by the statement that if you fasten a hair-brush to a mill-wheel, with the handle forward, so as to develop itself into a neck by moving always in the same direction, and within continual hearing of a steam-whistle, after a certain number of revolutions the hair-brush will fall in love with the whistle; they will marry, lay an egg, and the produce will be a nightingale.”

“Amusement,” says Dean Kitchin, “filled those who knew Ruskin’s ways; amazement, those who did not.”<sup>1</sup> Those were days in which the Darwinian theory was in its first rapture of acceptance; the jest was as if a man had spoken disrespectfully of the equator. But the lecturer in part meant his skit to be taken seriously, and in the succeeding lecture he returned to the subject—in graver tones, and with an apology for his previous raillery. In *The Eagle’s Nest* he puts his criticism in closely reasoned terms. He was lecturing on the construction and disposition of plume-filaments, and showing some of his studies in illustration :—

“I went to Mr. Darwin’s account of the peacock’s feather, hoping to learn some of the existing laws of life which regulate the local disposition of the colour. But none of these appear to be known; and I am informed only that peacocks have grown to be peacocks out of brown pheasants, because the young feminine brown pheasants like fine feathers. Whereupon I say to myself, ‘Then either there was a distinct species of brown pheasants originally born with a taste for fine feathers; and therefore with remarkable eyes in their heads,—which would be a much more wonderful distinction of species than being born with remarkable eyes in their tails,—or else all pheasants would have been peacocks by this time.’”

Ruskin published his first two lectures later in the year, in separate parts, adding a third chapter in 1881, under

<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, p. 41.

the title *Love's Meinie*—a poem, as it has been called, in two words.<sup>1</sup> He reminds his readers that “Meinie” is the old English word for “many,” or an attendant company—as of bridesmaids round a bride, or servants of a master, or scholars of a teacher, or soldiers of a leader, or lords of a king. But he was thinking chiefly, as he says, of “the many” of living birds which attend upon the God of Love in the *Romaunt of the Rose*; with further thoughts of St. Francis and St. Bernard, and of the lovers’ litany, in similitudes from the birds, in Juliet’s orchard. The poetry of Ruskin’s title is significant of the spirit in which he approached the study of ornithology. His care was for the plumage, not for the anatomy. In study for his lectures, he collected skins, had models made of feathers, purchased from H. S. Marks a large collection of drawings, and himself made many others at the Zoological Gardens and the British Museum. His drawings were as faithful as care could make them; his pen-pictures were meant to be suggestive, and were touched with fancy. He describes the swallow as “an owl that has been trained by the Graces. It is a bat that loves the morning light. It is the aerial reflection of a dolphin. It is the tender domestication of a trout.” So, in *The Queen of the Air*, he calls the nightshade “a primrose with a curse upon it.” A distinguished man of science sagely remarks of such descriptions that they would be “useless for natural history purposes.”<sup>2</sup> The only question that is apposite is whether they are true, beautiful, and vivid as far as they go, and are calculated to stimulate thought and fancy. In *Love’s Meinie*, says an Oxford lover of birds, “are some of the most delightfully wilful thoughts about birds ever yet published.”<sup>3</sup> As a book, however, it is very fragmentary, and suffers from a combination of two not wholly congruous schemes. It was begun as a course of lectures on “Greek and English birds”; it ends with a chapter designed to be the beginning

<sup>1</sup> “Mr. Ruskin’s Titles,” by Mrs. E. T. Cook, in *Good Words*, July 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Avebury, in *St. George*, vol. vi. p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> W. Warde Fowler, *A Year with the Birds*, p. 33.



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of a handbook of English birds. Two of the Oxford lectures were repeated during May at Eton, the first of several lectures which he gave there, at the suggestion in the first instance of Mr. Oscar Browning. "The Eton boys gave me such a cheer last night," wrote Ruskin to Mrs. Severn, "as I've never yet had in my life." Except for the lectures at Oxford and Eton, all the early part of 1873, as also the spring and summer, were spent quietly at Brantwood. The Lake Country in winter—its most attractive season, as many of its lovers consider—was new to him, and he enjoyed it greatly:—

"*January 23.*—Entirely clear starlight and snowlight, with sickle of crystal moon, at half-past five. Yesterday a glorious walk in north wind. The stream and old bridge in Yewdale greatly sweet to me. Strange coming and going of clouds; purple sunset; pillars of reflection at the Waterhead."

"*February 25.*—Yesterday entirely radiant in calm frost and pure snow. Rowed to Fir Island, the beauty of it and intense quiet making me feel as if in a feverish dream."

"*July 17.*—Yesterday up Wetherlam, and down by the upper Tarn, by myself. Stayed on top of second peak of Wetherlam, seeing at once Skiddaw, Saddleback, Scawfell, Helvellyn, the Langdales, Blea Tarn, Windermere (nearly all), and Lancashire and the sea as far as Preston, and in the midst of it, my own little nest. Came down by miner's cottage, and heard of boy, from sixteen to twenty-four, dying of crushed thigh, and *I* am discontented. But the mystery and sadness of it all."

How characteristic of Ruskin's work is the mingled note of beauty and sadness in these entries! The hand which penned them was busy, at alternate moments, in writing pages of *Proserpina* or *Deucalion*—revealing the delicate beauties of flower and herb, or translating into words the splendour of the Iris of the Earth—and in hurling through *Fors Clavigera* thunderbolts of passionate indignation against the faults and follies of the age, and the whole fabric of the modern world. He was at once a prophet prophesying against the evil of the world and a magician revealing its beauty. "My work is very complex just now," he wrote to

Mrs. Severn (March 3), "Birds, *Fors*, Flowers, and Botticelli all in a mess; house-building here and garden-planning and harbour-digging." His literary work for the year was miscellaneous. In addition to the usual monthly numbers of *Fors Clavigera* and the essay on Miracles, already mentioned, he engaged in controversy upon Political Economy with W. R. Greg and Professor Hodgson; he wrote upon Mr. Ernest George's etchings; he sent an Address to the Mansfield Art School; published two parts of *Love's Meinie* and one of *Ariadne Florentina*; brought out new editions of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*, and reissued *The Crown of Wild Olive* with a new Appendix, containing an analysis of part of Carlyle's *Friedrich*. He was also "hard at work on new elements of drawing," though none of this (*The Laws of Fésolé*) saw the light till some years later. Among the books which he read, in addition to the daily study of the Bible (in Greek and English), were Callimachus—"very delicious and fruitful to me"—and *The Romance of the Rose* in a French manuscript. Each day he copied out several lines, noting obscure words, and occasionally amusing himself by translating the French into English verse.

In October Ruskin kept term at Oxford, delivering there a course of ten lectures "On the Tuscan Art directly antecedent to the Florentine Year of Victories" (1253-4). The lectures were all composed, and in type, before they were delivered, and were presently published under the title *Val d'Arno*. They were greatly enjoyed by Carlyle, to whom Ruskin had sent advance copies of some of them, and who thus acknowledged their receipt:—

"5 CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA. 31 October, 1873.—After several weeks of eager expectation, I received, morning before yesterday, the sequel to your kind little note, in the shape of four bright 4to lectures (forwarded by an Aylesbury printer) on the Historical and Artistic development of Val d'Arno. Many thanks to you for so pleasant and instructive a gift. The work is full of beautiful and delicate perceptions, new ideas, both new and true, which throw a bright illumination over that important piece of History, and awake fresh curiosities and speculations on that and on

CHAP. other much wider subjects. It is all written with the old nobleness  
XIII. and fire, in which no other living voice to my knowledge equals yours. *Perge, perge*—and, as the Irish say, ‘more power to your elbow!’ . . .”

These lectures, however, were not so popular as some other of the Professor’s courses. “Displeased at having thin audience,” he wrote in his diary (Oct. 23, 1873) after the second lecture; and again (Nov. 7), after the sixth, “Yesterday much beaten about; bad day altogether, and thinnest audience I ever had at lecture. Didn’t like the lecture myself.” The fact is that, in writing the lectures so carefully, Ruskin had packed them too full. His purpose was to trace the revival of the fine arts in Tuscany during the thirteenth century to its ultimate sources in the social, political, and religious influences of the time. But there was hardly enough of “*Tuscan art*” to please those who came to hear about pictures and buildings; while the sketches of Florentine history in the thirteenth century presupposed more familiarity with persons and incidents than perhaps every hearer possessed, or than every reader, unless he knows his Sismondi very well, has always in his mind.

After delivering these lectures, Ruskin stayed on at Oxford till the end of term, to teach in his school. He spent the close of the year, and the early days of 1874, partly at Margate—being led there by desire to study Turner’s skies—and partly in London, where he went through a round of theatres, circuses, and pantomimes with young friends. To them he was all gaiety and fun; but for him circus and transformation scenes had their moral, as he describes in the number of *Fors Clavigera* (39) written at the time:—

“Which is the reality, and which the pantomime? Nay, it appears to me not of much moment which we choose to call Reality. Both are equally real; and the only question is whether the cheerful state of things which the spectators, especially the youngest and wisest, entirely applaud and approve at Hengler’s and Drury Lane, must necessarily be interrupted always by the woeful interlude of the outside world. . . . There have been dear little Cinderella and her Prince, and all the pretty children beauti-

fully dressed, taught thoroughly how to behave, and how to dance, and how to sit still, and giving everybody delight that looks at them; whereas, the instant I come outside the door, I find all the children about the streets ill-dressed, and ill-taught, and ill-behaved, and nobody cares to look at them. . . . Very notable it is also that just as in these two theatrical entertainments—the Church and the Circus,—the imaginative congregations still retain some true notions of the value of human and beautiful things, and don't have steam-preachers nor steam-dancers,—so also they retain some just notion of the truth, in moral things: Little Cinderella, for instance, at Hengler's, never thinks of offering her poor fairy God-mother a ticket from the Mendicity Society. She immediately goes and fetches her some dinner. And she makes herself generally useful, and sweeps the doorstep, and dusts the door;—and none of the audience think any the worse of her on that account. . . . Nevertheless, it being too certain that the sweeping of doorsteps diligently will not in all cases enable a pretty maiden to drive away from said doorsteps, for evermore, in a gilded coach,—one has to consider what may be the next best for her. And next best, or, in the greater number of cases, best altogether, will be that Love, with his felicities, should himself enter over the swept and garnished steps, and abide with her in her own life, such as it is."

In Ruskin's own life there was no abiding of the felicities of love. The year closed in gloom:—

(*To DR. JOHN BROWN.*) "HERNE HILL, 29th Dec., 1873.—DEAREST DR. BROWN,—Your letters are so helpful to me, you can't think, for I am more alone now in the gist of me than ever, only Carlyle and you with me in sympathy . . . and all that I had of preciousness utterly gone, mother, nurse, and just afterwards, in a very terrible way, what I thought I should never have lost. Then this battle with the dragon is far more close and fearful than I conceived. Turner only knew quite what it was. . . . Don't write a word that tires you, to me, or anybody. . . ."

Sage advice, which Ruskin was in his own case abundantly to ignore.



## CHAPTER XIV

### WITH ST. FRANCIS AT ASSISI

(1874)

“One should be fearful of being wrong in poetry when one thinks differently from the poets, and in religion when one thinks differently from the saints.”—JOUBERT.

RUSKIN kept the Lent term of 1874 at Oxford, and it was then that he opened negotiations, as already related, for his road-digging experiment at Hincksey. He had announced himself to give “Three Lectures on the Relations of Outline between Rock and Perpetual Snow in the Alps.” But as the appointed day drew near, his distress of spirit was so great that he felt himself unable to face the ordeal. “The giving up lectures,” he wrote to Mrs. Severn, “does not mean any giving *in*, but that I have no heart or strength for *speaking*, and could not have looked people in the face. The sorrow so sucks the life out of me; but it increases the thoughtful power, and I’m doing really more than if I were at Oxford. But the Prince will be vexed; he really wanted to hear me lecture again.” The geological lectures were accordingly postponed till the October term, and Ruskin went abroad for seven months.

#### I

The foreign tour of 1874 affected vitally Ruskin’s views upon Italian art, and it provided most of the material which is worked up in the lectures on *The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools* and in *Mornings in Florence*. On this occasion he took no friends with him; though he was attended by his servant Crawley, a courier (Klein), and (for a short time) Mr.

Allen. He started in great depression, and at Paris he found it necessary to seek medical advice. But by the time he was fairly in Italy, the change of scene and work had effected a cure. "I am better," he writes to Mrs. Severn from Pisa (April 9); "indeed, nearly quite well to-day, and have already done all I had to do essential here, besides getting a lovely walk outside the walls. The courtesy and dignity of the older peasants, and the essential sweetness of character of the people generally, polluted and degraded as they are, touch me more deeply every time I return to Italy." From Pisa he went to Assisi. One of the main objects of his visit to Italy was to superintend, as a member of the council of the Arundel Society, the work of copying some of Giotto's frescoes in the two churches of St. Francis. This duty led Ruskin into much fruitful study; but for the present he was content with a general inspection, and went on to Rome, *en route* for Sicily. His friends Colonel and Mrs. Yule and their daughter (Miss Amy Yule) were at this time living at Palermo, and they had pressed him to come and see them. The weather was unpropitious, and there are pages of his diary filled with the daily iniquities of the "Storm Cloud." Naples he found to be "certainly the most disgusting place in Europe," combining "the vice of Paris with the misery of Dublin and the vulgarity of New York" (April 19)—"the most loathsome nest of human caterpillars I was ever forced to stay in,—a hell with all the devils imbecile in it" (April 20). *Impressions de voyage* in Sicily were more pleasing:—

(To MRS. SEVERN.) "TAORMINA, *Sunday, 26th April, '74.*—This morning, at five, or a little earlier, I saw the dawn come on Etna, the most awful thing I ever yet saw, in heaven or earth. By dawn, I mean rosy sunrise. I dressed by the early light at half-past four, and got out to a little lonely campo in front of a chapel, looking down, fifteen hundred feet, to the seashore, and across to Etna, whose cone rises in one long sweep. . . . The summit, this morning, was throwing up white smoke in a perfectly vertical column, two thousand feet higher, and with a perfectly visible motion like that of ordinary slow smoke, at this distance—fifteen miles. . . .

CHAP. Just at the moment when the sun touched the base of the smoke  
XIV. without descending to the mountain summit, it was literally the Israelite pillar of Fire and Cloud. . . . At the instant the sunrise touched the top of the cone of the mountain itself, the belfry of the chapel beside me broke into a discordant jangle of deep-toned bells, as if to give warning to the whole village; beating first in slow time, one stroke, hard and loud; then quicker, and then with discordant clashes and hurries; the bells very fine and solemn in tone, but dreadfully painful from the discordant and violent ringing. The quantity of horrible annoyance of moral as well as bodily nerve one has to bear sometimes from this entirely neglected and lost people (the higher in rank the worse) cannot be told; it makes me angry and sorrowful to a degree I never was yet—and you know that is saying much. Nevertheless, the discordance and almost terror of the beautiful body of sound was in a strange sympathy with the horror of the morning light—rose red—on the dreadful cone. . . . The overwhelming multitude of new impressions crush each other. Fancy, since yesterday morning at five o'clock, I have seen Charybdis, the rock of Scylla, the straits of Messina, Messina itself, now the second city in Sicily, the whole classical range of Panormus on one side, Calabria on the other, and a line of coast unequalled in luxuriance of beauty; every crag of it crested with Moorish or Saracenic or Norman architecture wholly new to me; a Greek theatre, the most perfect in Europe, now visible on one side of the valley beneath my window, and Etna on the other. And think that from the earliest dawn of Greek life that cone has been the centre of tradition and passion as relating to the gods of strength and darkness (Proserpine's city is in the mid-island, but in full sight of Etna), and you may fancy what a wild dream of incredible, labyrinthine wonder, it is to me."

Some of Ruskin's drawings made in Sicily—of dawn and sunset on Etna, and of the tomb of Frederick II. at Palermo—may be seen at Oxford.

He now returned to Rome, and set to work on Botticelli's "Zipporah." The study pleased him. "I have got my Zipporah," he wrote to Mr. Allen (May 20), "more to please me than anything I ever did." The copy had taken him fourteen working days in all. He made a study also

of the little dog in the same picture. "Zipporah's pet doggie has cost me," he tells Mrs. Severn (June 3), "head for head, nearly as much trouble as his mistress. His little undulating soft mouth, with its intense enjoyment of dinner mixed with supreme impertinence, and the wink in his left eye, which shows that the principal enjoyment of his life is barking at Moses, have given me no end of trouble—but I've got him." Of Ruskin's Roman days on this, his last visit, pleasant records are given in his letters:—

"I lodged at the Hôtel de Russie; and, in the archway of the courtyard of that mansion, waited usually, in the mornings, a Capuchin friar, begging for his monastery. Now, though I greatly object to any clergyman's coming and taking me by the throat, and saying 'Pay me that thou owest,' I never pass a begging friar without giving him sixpence, or the equivalent fivepence of foreign coin;—extending the charity even occasionally as far as tenpence, if no fivepenny-bit chance to be in my purse. And this particular begging friar having a gentle face, and a long white beard, and a beautiful cloak, like a blanket; and being altogether the pleasantest sight, next to Sandro Botticelli's Zipporah, I was like to see in Rome in the course of the day, I always gave him the extra fivepence for looking so nice; which generosity so worked on his mind,—(the more usual English religious sentiment in Rome expending itself rather in buying poetical pictures of monks than in filling their bellies)—that, after some six or seven doles of tenpences, he must needs take my hand one day, and try to kiss it. Which being only just able to prevent, I took him round the neck and kissed his lips instead: and this, it seems, was more to him than the tenpences, for, next day, he brought me a little reliquary, with a certificated fibre in it of St. Francis' cloak (the hair one, now preserved at Assisi)."<sup>1</sup>

(To MISS SUSAN BEEVER.) "*June 2.*—Last Sunday I was in a lost church—found again:<sup>2</sup> a church of the second or third century, dug in a green hill of the Campagna, built underground;—its secret entrance like a sand-martin's nest. Such the temple of the

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 56.

<sup>2</sup> The Basilica of SS. Petronilla, Nereus, and Achilleus.



CHAP. Lord, as the King Solomon of that time had to build it; not 'the  
XIV. mountain of the Lord's house shall be established above the hills,' but the cave of the Lord's house—as the fox's hole—beneath them. And here, now lighted by the sun for the first time (for they are still digging the earth from the steps), are the marbles of those early Christian days; the first efforts of their new hope to show itself in enduring record, the new hope of a Good Shepherd:—there they carved Him, with a spring flowing at His feet, and round Him the cattle of the Campagna in which they had dug their church; the very selfsame goats which this morning have been trotting past my window through the most populous streets of Rome, innocently following their Shepherd, tinkling their bells, and shaking their long spiral horns and white beards; the very same deep dew-lapped cattle which were that Sunday morning feeding on the hill-side above, carved on the tomb-marbles sixteen hundred years ago. How you would have liked to see it, Susie!

"And now to-day I am going to work in an eleventh-century church<sup>1</sup> of quite proud and victorious Christianity, with its grand bishops and saints lording it over Italy. The bishop's throne all marble and mosaic of precious colours and of gold, high under the vaulted roof at the end behind the altar; and line upon line of pillars of massy porphyry and marble, gathered out of the ruins of the temples of the great race who had persecuted them, till they had said to the hills, Cover us, like the wicked. And then *their* proud time came, and their enthronement on the Seven Hills; and now, what is to be their fate once more?—of pope and cardinal and dome, Peter's or Paul's by name only,—'My house, no more a house of prayer, but a den of thieves'?"

(To MRS. SEVERN.) "CORPUS DOMINI [June 4], '74.—I've never told you—though I've meant to twenty times—how I spend my Roman day. I rise at six, dress quietly, looking out now and then to see the blue sky through the pines beyond the Piazza del Popolo. Coffee at seven, and then I write and correct press till nine. Breakfast, and half-an-hour of Virgil, or lives of saints, or other pathetic or improving work. General review of colour-box and apparatus, start about ten for Sistine Chapel, nice little jingling drive in open one-horse carriage. Arrive at chapel, sauntering a

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's diary shows S. Lorenzo to be meant.

little about the fountains first. Public are turned out at eleven, and then I have absolute peace with two other artists—each on a separate platform—till two, when public are let in again. I strike work; pack up with dignity; get away about three; take the first little carriage at door again, drive to Capitol, saunter a little about Forum, or the like, or into the Lateran, or San Clemente, and so home to dinner at five. Dine very leisurely; read a little French novel at dessert; then out to Pincian—sit among the roses and hear band play. Saunter down Trinità steps as it gets dark; tea; and a little more French novel; a little review of day's work; plans for to-morrow; and to bed."

## II

From Rome Ruskin returned to Assisi, where he settled down for several weeks of hard work. In that city of the saints he found an epitome of early Italian art and a school of architecture. His eyes were opened, as they had never been so fully before, to the genius of Giotto, and he entered into a communion of spirit with St. Francis which deeply coloured his later writings. Ruskin stayed at the inn, but he wrote in the Sacristan's cell; the little room is described in several letters to friends, but more fully in *Fors Clavigera*.<sup>1</sup> He felt "entirely at home" in it, he says, "because the room—except in the one point of being extremely dirty—is just the kind of thing I used to see in my aunt's bake-house; and the country and the sweet valley outside still rest in peace, such as used to be on the Surrey hills in the olden days." Ruskin was equally at home with the monks. Two of them were at this time permitted to remain, Fra Antonio and Fra Giovanni, "one the sacristan who has charge of the entire church, and is responsible for its treasures; the other exercising what authority is left to the convent among the people of the town. They are both so good and innocent and sweet, one can't pity them enough."<sup>2</sup> With both, and especially with Fra Antonio Coletti, Ruskin became very friendly. Indeed, wherever he stayed and

<sup>1</sup> See Letter 46.<sup>2</sup> Letter to Miss Beever, April 14, 1874.

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studied he made friends in this way, and the fact should be remembered when one reads his printed words of vituperation. "The accursed modern Italians," he was used to say; and here from Assisi he wrote to Mrs. Severn (June 4) that "A beggar boy,—half idiot, whole devil, greatly irritates me. The quantity of wretches of this sort whom wholesome earthquake would swallow like Korah and make manure of! Korah was the mere representation of millions equally insolent and far more nasty who remain unburied." But while Ruskin inveighed against his fellow-creatures in general, he endeared himself to individuals. Of his talks with Fra Antonio, there is an amusing mention in *Fors Clavigera*:—

"The other day, in the Sacristan's cell at Assisi, I got into a great argument with the Sacristan himself, about the prophet Isaiah. It had struck me that I should like to know what sort of a person his wife was: and I asked my good host, over our morning's coffee, whether the Church knew anything about her. Brother Antonio, however, instantly and energetically denied that he ever had a wife. He was a 'Castissimo profeta,'—how could I fancy anything so horrible of him! Vainly I insisted that, since he had children, he must either have been married, or been under special orders, like the prophet Hosea. But my Protestant Bible was good for nothing, said the Sacristan. Nay, I answered, I never read, usually, in anything later than a thirteenth-century text; let him produce me one out of the convent library, and see if I couldn't find Shearjashub in it. The discussion dropped upon this,—because the library was inaccessible at the moment; and no printed Vulgate to be found."<sup>1</sup>

Of Fra Giovanni, Sir William Richmond has given some reminiscences, as also of other places where he had found loving memories of Ruskin:—

"There was a certain Fra Giovanni, sacristan of the Church of S. Francesco d'Assisi, a great friend of mine some thirty-five years ago—alas, now he has joined the great majority. He was a tremendous snuff-taker, an eternal gossip, intensely human, with a

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 45.

childlike simplicity, and a mind as narrow as the blade of a knife. On returning to Assisi some years afterwards I learnt that Mr. Ruskin had been there for some months, and I gathered that he had taken hold of the very soul of the folk of Assisi, and engaged the adoration, respect, and friendship of Fra Giovanni, who could talk of nothing else but Mr. Ruskin. Wrapped up in a pocket-handkerchief, after the fashion of the Italians, he kept letters from Mr. Ruskin, and treasured them like the relics of a saint. The Master annually forwarded a subscription towards the expenses of keeping the church clean. At Amiens he produced the same kind of effect. Nearly all the custodians of that cathedral, about which he wrote so charmingly, possess letters from Mr. Ruskin, written with as much care as to matter and style as if they had been intended for publication. In Perugia the same tale is told of him.”<sup>1</sup>

Another instance has been noted already at Rouen,<sup>2</sup> and it was the same thing at the Armenian Convent at Venice, and again at Lucca, where Ruskin spent some weeks of this summer, and which he visited again in 1882.<sup>3</sup> Ruskin felt the power he thus had of attracting devotion from sympathetic souls. During his first days at Assisi he had written to Mrs. Severn (April 12):—

“Padre Antonio rejoices in the hope of giving me my coffee every day at one o’clock, and every face in the streets seems kind to me. Begging enough, of course, but sincere and frank; as of poor clans-people asking a chief’s help—not impostors making the most of a stranger. If I chose to stay long, or returned annually, in seven years I could be as much a chief as Fergus McIvor—only ruling for peace and good instead of trouble. The least word of kindness opens a fountain of passion in a moment.”

He relented even to one of his favourite *bêtes noires*, when he met him in the flesh. “A long and useful talk with Cavalcaselle makes me sorry,” he notes in his diary (Assisi, July 10), “for what I thought against him.”

<sup>1</sup> “Ruskin as I knew him,” in *St. George*, vol. v. p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 464.



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Ruskin thus loved his fellow-men, when he came into personal contact with them. But he could never go to Italy without finding new instances of old buildings destroyed, pictures repainted, or spots sacred to him by early associations and for their own sake vulgarised by the march of "progress." Such experiences filled him with feverish impatience to snatch records of beautiful things while yet there was time. "My time is passed," he wrote from Florence in this year, "in a fierce steady struggle to save all I can every day, as a fireman from a smouldering ruin, of history or aspect."<sup>1</sup> The experience filled him also with furious indignation at those who were responsible for the destruction. This responsibility must be shared, he felt, by all who consented to, or even who remained passive under, the wrong-doing. These are the feelings which explain Ruskin's refusal of an honour which the Royal Institute of British Architects desired to do him at this time. In March 1874 the Institute had resolved to award to him the gold medal of the year. The intimation reached him when he was in Italy, and after taking time to consider the matter he wrote from Rome declining the medal. He set out a list of the architectural vandalisms which he had witnessed in Italy, and "under these circumstances," he said, "I cannot but feel that it is no time for us to play at adjudging medals to each other." His friend, Sir Gilbert Scott, the President of the Institute, earnestly begged him to reconsider this refusal, but Ruskin wrote from Assisi, on June 12, declining so to do. He took occasion to emphasise what he considered the root of the evil, namely, architects' "commission on the cost"; and he cited, as further cases of vandalism, the "miserable repainting" of the Upper Church at Assisi, and "the destruction of one of the loveliest scenes in Italy—the fountains between the buttresses of Santa Chiara." The correspondence, as a writer in the *Journal of the Institute* remarks, was "eminently characteristic of the lofty-minded irreconcilable."

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Miss Beever, August 25, 1874.

## III

Ruskin's first work at Assisi was to study the frescoes attributed to Giotto in the Upper Church, which were among the works to be copied for the Arundel Society. In letters written from Assisi at this time he throws doubt upon Giotto's share in the work in its present state; but he devoted most of his time to the Lower Church, in which the triangular spaces in the vault over the High Altar contain Giotto's frescoes of the three counsels of perfection (the marriage of St. Francis with Holy Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience) and St. Francis in Glory. In the south transept is a large fresco, attributed to Cimabue, of the Madonna and Child, with St. Francis and four angels. Ruskin's main work in sketching was devoted to the "Marriage with St. Poverty," and to the fresco of Cimabue. He was allowed to have scaffolding erected in order the better to see Giotto's work. These studies exercised a profound influence upon Ruskin's estimate of Italian art, and of spiritual things beyond and behind it. In an earlier chapter some previous developments of his views were noticed, and a final change was noted as yet to come.<sup>1</sup> The last movement of his mind had been away from evangelical faith; it had coincided with his growing admiration of the great worldly, irreligious painters; his religion had become "the religion of humanity," though "full of sacred colour and melancholy shade"; his teaching had been in such exhortations as may be based on intellectual scepticism. But while engaged on drawing Giotto's frescoes, "I discovered," he says, "the fallacy under which I had been tormented for sixteen years,—the fallacy that Religious artists were weaker than Irreligious. I found that all Giotto's 'weaknesses' (so called) were merely absences of material science. He did not know, and could not, in his day, so much of perspective as Titian,—so much of the laws of light and shade, or so much of technical composition. But I found he was in the make of him, and contents, a

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CHAP. very much stronger and greater man than Titian; that the  
XIV. things I had fancied easy in his work, because they were so unpretending and simple, were nevertheless entirely inimitable; that the Religion in him, instead of weakening, had solemnized and developed every faculty of his heart and hand; and finally, that his work, in all the innocence of it, was yet a human achievement and possession, quite above everything that Titian had ever done."<sup>1</sup> This "discovery" affected, first, Ruskin's estimate of painters; and at Florence, presently, he set himself to write of Giotto and his works in Florence as twenty years before, with a more reserved admiration for the master, he had written of *Giotto and his Works in Padua*.

The revelations which came to Ruskin in the Church of St. Francis affected also his religious attitude. His writings henceforth became, as he says, "much more distinctly Christian in tone";<sup>2</sup> and something, I cannot doubt, was due to the spirit of the holy place at which the new revelations had come to him. At Assisi Ruskin was studying not only the painted frescoes, but the Bible with his usual intentness:—

"*June 28.*—Hot and weak, having slept little, lying awake till past two thinking of what I could do for England, or how I should know what was right. Read first vision of Ezekiel."

"*July 3.*—I challenged Fra Antonio to raise one of his dead friars out of the cemetery if he wanted me to believe—this morning over our coffee. On which, for the sake of the end of it, he recounts Dives and Lazarus very grandly."

"*July 30 (Lucca).*—Beginning the great central *Fors*, I chance on and read carefully, and as an answer to much thought last night, Isaiah vi."

"The great central *Fors*" is the Letter (45) in which he made his most earnest and direct appeal to the Squires of England, and found some right of appeal in that his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. In that same letter he assailed with concentrated force the self-regarding basis

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter 46.

of current economic doctrine, and proclaimed the law of love—

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“L’Amor che muove il Sole, e l’altre stelle.”

His mood was one of spiritual exaltation. He had been living at the home of St. Francis, drawing the pictures of his life and passion, writing in the cell of his convent, handling the relics of the saint, and feeling ever more and more in sympathy with him who “in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers sisters, brothers,” and who took the doves out of the fowler’s hands. The Sacristan prayed every day for his conversion: “C’è una piccola cosa, ma credo che San Francesco lo farà.”<sup>1</sup> The good Sacristan’s prayer did not avail to make Ruskin join the Roman Church; but his dream at Matlock came back to him.<sup>2</sup> In some esoteric sense he felt henceforward that he was in very truth a brother of the third order of Francis.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV

From Assisi and Perugia Ruskin went to Lucca. It was a journey only from the influence of St. Francis to that of Ilaria—his “Lady of Caretto,” the type to him of all that is noble in woman, and right in art. He worked hard at studies from this monument, as also upon Niccola Pisano’s sculpture over the door of the cathedral. After Lucca came a month at Florence, where he plunged into the work in the Spanish Chapel which led to his writing *Mornings in Florence*. Here, as ever with Ruskin, the days proved all too short, the years too few. He had known Florence well thirty years before, and he was now a Professor of the Fine Arts, but as he grew older he felt only how much he had yet to learn. “Yesterday through the Uffizi,” he writes in his diary (July 27), “wishing I was a boy again, and feeling myself just able

<sup>1</sup> So the Sacristan said to Mr. Oscar Browning, who visited Assisi in the winter of 1874 (“Recollections of Ruskin,” in *St. George*, vol. vi. p. 142).

<sup>2</sup> See chapter xii., above, p. 218.

*Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. x.



CHAP. to begin to learn things rightly." If Ruskin is stimulating,  
XIV. suggestive, provocative above most teachers, is not the reason that he was always learning? "Botticelli," he wrote to Professor Norton (June 19), "remains where he was, because he couldn't get higher in my mind." But when the pictures at Florence were re-studied, his admiration for the painter went higher still. "At Academy," he notes in his diary (Aug. 29), "saw Sandro's Madonna Enthroned and Madonna Crowned, and was more crushed than ever by art since I lay down on the floor of the Scuola di San Rocco before the Crucifixion." He worked unceasingly at studies from the "Spring,"<sup>1</sup> and in the Spanish Chapel. He was much disturbed, as he complains vociferously in his diary, by street noises;<sup>2</sup> at Fésòle he was even tempted to pray for deafness:—

"(*Diary, August 24.*)—Slept well after finding the sacred places of Fiesole still safe, though gambling boys, shrieking, howling, swearing in the sweet field of the cloister and beside the cypresses of Turner's view, so that deafness would now be a mercy to me, in Italy. I've never quite conceived of deafness though. Fancy never hearing water ripple or dash, or a bird sing, or a leaf rustle!"

His life of eager, unceasing work at Florence is described in letters to Mrs. Severn:—

"(*Sept. 3.*)—I don't know what I'm about now, really. (I'm so at my wit's end between Botticelli's Graces and Simon Memmi's Virtues.) . . . The days are flying like minutes, and I seem to get nothing done."

"*Friday evening, Sept. 18th, '74.*—I must tell you exactly how this last day but one in Florence has passed. It has been a nice active one. Up at six. Red dawn. Bothered in shaving by aphorisms coming into my head.<sup>3</sup> Dressed by ten minutes to seven. Read Esdras ii. xiv., to verse 15. Coffee. Put down

<sup>1</sup> The picture at that time was "skied," for Ruskin mentions in his diary that he got up to it on a high ladder.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Deucalion*, i. ch. v. ("The Valley of Cluse").

<sup>3</sup> Probably the aphorisms in *Laws of Fésòle*.

bothering aphorisms. Put on boots. Walk to Santa Croce quietly. Set to work thinking over Giotto's fresco of St. Francis before the Soldan. Sketch Soldan's crown. Do eyes. Feeble attempt at beard. Sketch draperies of Soldan's discomfited Magi. A. Magus giving in. B. Magus shut up. C. Exit Magus. [Here sketch.] Proceeded to examine St. John in Patmos. Sketched Woman, Baby, Dragon, and Moon, and thought it time to go to breakfast. Found letters from Joanie. . . . *Fors* for October, proof. Ate breakfast, read letters and *Fors* proof, out at eleven for Spanish Chapel. Drew Pope Clement and his mitre. Ditto, Geometry's back hair coming loose in an infinite curve. Deciphered inscription in St. Thomas Aquinas' book. Got ladder in Green Cloister. Examined picture of St. Anne and baby. Came back and had a final try at Logic's white jacket. Had to give in—no use. I never yet have been able to draw a girl's shoulder; it's just where the arrow points, under the hair. [Here sketch.] Then had to finish Zoroaster's beard, and Tubal-Cain's anvil . . . and then went home to dinner and wrote to Di Ma.<sup>1</sup> Then drove up to Bellosguardo and saw sunset, and walked home, and wrote out notes till ten o'clock."

## V

Ruskin's Italian work was now at an end, but he had still to give finishing touches to the lectures on Alpine form which he had announced for the October term. For this purpose he decided to revisit the Savoy mountains, and the first week in October saw him established once more in his favourite quarters at the Hôtel du Mont Blanc, St. Martin, within a walk of Chamouni. He had converse once more with his old guide, Joseph Couttet, now eighty years of age—"a beautiful old man." The wasting of the snows gave him much to think of, and he began rewriting his glacier lectures. He made, too, on this occasion the sketch—"one of the best I ever made of the thing I have loved best"—of Mont Blanc, now in the Oxford Collection.<sup>2</sup> The entries in his diary

<sup>1</sup> A pet name (dear mama) for Mrs. Severn.

<sup>2</sup> See *Notes on the Educational Series*, 1878 (Lib. Ed., vol. xxi, p. 144).

CHAP. made at St. Martin have the old note of rapture. "Rosy  
XIV. sunset intense; beyond all glows I ever remember; rocks  
turned to garnets, carbuncles; snow to rose leaves" (Oct.  
10). "Divine, unchanging days and nights; the sun like  
a golden hand on an azure dial, enamelled all with pine  
and snow. The best day for work I ever had in my life"  
(Oct. 11). "Exquisite ineffable beauty, and joy of heart  
for me, all along Valley of Cluse. So, walked to Bonneville.  
There, at first, still all sweet: then a cloud seemed to come  
over my mind and the sky together" (Oct. 18).

So also was it to be with the mingled sunshine and  
cloud of Ruskin's inner life. The year next to come was  
to be one of overmastering cloud, but for the present  
there were "loveliest letters from Ireland." The long  
change of scene in Italy, the peace and mountain air of  
Chamouni, had put new life into him, and he returned to  
a term of great energy at Oxford. In the few days which  
he spent in London he saw Miss La Touche; had stimulating  
talks with Carlyle;<sup>1</sup> and saw something of Burne-Jones.  
At Oxford he gave first the postponed, and now much ex-  
panded, lectures on Mountain Form; and then the course  
on *The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Florence*. This  
admirable course was not published by Ruskin, as he de-  
tached some of the material for use in *Mornings in Florence*;  
it is printed, so far as his notes serve, in the Library Edition.  
It consisted largely of readings in Vasari—"an ass with  
precious things in his panniers,"<sup>2</sup> and contains much illumi-  
nating analysis of the works of Cimabue and Giotto (the  
"æsthetic" masters); of N. Pisano, Brunelleschi, Quercia,  
Ghiberti (the "mathematical"); and of Angelico and Botti-  
celli (representatives of the "Christian Romantic" school).  
In all, Ruskin delivered twelve lectures during this term.  
He also attended twice a week at the Drawing School.  
The lectures on Glaciers went well, and he notes in a letter  
to a friend that there was a large audience of Masters  
at them. They were afterwards incorporated into his  
book called *Deucalion*. The lectures on Florentine artists

<sup>1</sup> Some of these are recorded in *Præterita*, vol. ii. §§ 229 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Library Ed., vol. xxxiv. p. 132.

were equally successful. He sent the following note to Mrs. Severn after the first of them :—

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“10th Nov. ’74.—I’ve had a nice breakfast of my diggers, and gave the best lecture, everybody says, I ever gave in Oxford. They are wrong ; but they ‘know what they like,’ and since it pleased them best, I admit that, in a practical sense, it was the best. It *wasn’t bad*, certainly ! Then I went to my diggings, and accepted a challenge to use the biggest stone hammer—and used it—with any of them.”

During this term, too, Ruskin mixed a good deal in the social life of the University. He notes in his diary dinners with the Prince, pleasant visits from Professor Henry Smith and Mr. Nettleship, meetings with Bishop Colenso and Sir Thomas Acland, a dinner with the Political Economy Club, and “nice breakfasts of undergraduates.” It was in this term, too, that Ruskin organised the symposia of which we have heard<sup>1</sup>—“meditative dinners,” as he calls them, at which a circle of the dons discussed various University questions with him. These discussions seem to have interested him greatly ; he notes in his diary the names of those who were present, the topics discussed, and the questions which he desired to propound. It was in every way one of his most active and useful terms at Oxford, as the whole year was one of the most fruitful in his life, and at times one of the happiest. Fate had other things in store for the near future.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 182.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE END OF A ROMANCE

(1875)

"The loftiest and purest love too often does but inflame the cloud of life with endless fire of pain."—*The Mystery of Life and its Arts*.

FOR eight years, 1866-74, Ruskin had lived under stress of deep emotion. There had been moments, days, and even months of hope; but these only served to intensify the preponderating disappointment and pain. "I wonder mightily," he wrote in his autobiography, "what sort of creature I should have turned out, if instead of the distracting and useless pain, I had had the joy of approved love, and the untellable, incalculable motive of its sympathy and praise. It seems to me such things are not allowed in this world. The men capable of the highest imaginative passion are always tossed on fiery waves by it."<sup>1</sup> On those fiery waves he himself had long been tossed. "The woman I hoped would have been my wife," he wrote at the end of 1874, "is dying."<sup>2</sup> In May 1875 the end came. Before relating the closing incidents, I must resume from earlier chapters, and recount in somewhat greater detail, the stages in this tragic romance.

#### I

When Ruskin declared his love for Miss Rose La Touche, and she had accepted it on a term of probation, her parents

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. i. § 255.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 49 (published January 1875).

had been painfully surprised. Ruskin was of an age rather with the mother than with the daughter; he had indeed taken a friendly interest in the education of the child; but the mother had supposed that it was by her society in equal measure that Ruskin was attracted. Clever, sympathetic, and possessed of many kindred tastes with his, she may well have thought that there was no need to look any further for his acceptance of the friendship and hospitality which she and her husband opened to him. The woman's heart in Rosie seems to have taught her better, but who can wonder that the revelation of his love for the child was a surprise, both to the mother and to the father? The period of three years' probation, to which Rosie consented, must have been a welcome relief. To Ruskin himself, who believed that he had a right to press his suit in this case, the years of waiting were at first not without their comfort. "Since Rosie sent me that last rose," he wrote to his mother (July 24, 1867), "after refusing her other lover, I have felt so sure of her that everything else begins to be at peace with me."

But the peace was not to last for long. Rosie even as a child was distressed by Ruskin's lapse from strict orthodoxy, by his wandering, as she called it, in Bye-path meadow. As the term of probation drew to its close, her uncertain health and mental development tended to interpose fresh difficulties. Even as quite a young girl, she had been subject to severe headaches, and once already she had been threatened with brain-fever. As she grew up, a certain restlessness and a constant desire for change betokened a neurotic tendency. She was from a child intensely religious; and Ruskin recounts<sup>1</sup> how, a little later, when she was a girl of eighteen, she astonished a party in a friend's house by compelling them to kneel down and pray with her for a sick friend. The religious feeling passed into an almost morbid phase, and encouraged a strain of melancholy in her mind. In 1870 she had published a little volume of devotional prose and verse, entitled *Clouds and Light*. The title and the contents alike reveal the

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Miss Kate Greenaway, January 23, 1884.

CHAP. mingled texture of her thoughts. One of the pieces is  
XV. particularly self-revealing:—

“I would look back upon my life to-night,  
Whose years have scarcely numbered twenty-two ;  
I would recall the darkness and the light,  
The hours of pain God’s angels led me through ;  
Out of His love He orders all things right,  
I, slow of heart, would feel that this is true.

I, in those years, have learnt that life is sad,  
Sad to heart-breaking did we walk alone.  
I, who have lost much which I never had,  
Yet which in ignorance I held mine own,  
Would leave that clouded past, its good and bad,  
Within His hands to whom all things are known.”

There is a diary of Rosie’s in existence in which, in the same spirit, she made, at the age of nineteen, a review of her mental and spiritual life. There is many a reference in it to Ruskin. “I think it was Mr. Ruskin’s teaching when I was about twelve that made me first take to looking after the poor.” “Mr. Ruskin taught me that which was good.” “The letters Mr. Ruskin wrote me only helped me, and did me no harm, whatever others may say.” She breaks off a word-picture of Mentone—“who but the golden-mouthed author of *Modern Painters* could describe the scenery?” But the burden of the “review” is the revelation of deep religious feeling over-weighing the intellectual balance, and of mind and body alike tortured by questionings and perplexities. The appointed period of Ruskin’s probation passed, but Rose was still irresolute. Sometimes she continued to hold out hopes ; at others she would not even let him see her, and this was the mood that was encouraged by her mother. The girl’s creed was narrowly Evangelical, and this set up a barrier between her and her lover, a conflict between her conscience and her heart. Ruskin, intensely religious though he ever was, had now passed wholly away from the Evangelical faith ; she shrunk back affrighted from the idea of being yoked to “an unbeliever.” “I had

sought for human love," she makes a character say in one of her tales, "and I had not loved Him." And it was one of her complaints against Ruskin that he loved her better than he loved God. There were times when she felt that she could not compromise her faith for her love, and Ruskin could not at any time for it conceal his doubts. "You are entirely right in almost everything," he wrote to Dr. John Brown (Christmas 1873), "except that about drawing 'in love.' One must paint or write truthfully from a loving heart; but one must not lie in love." Ruskin could not profess what he did not believe; and Rosie alternated between the love which she felt and her conception of religious duty.

The years during which this struggle went on in the mind of Rosie were to Ruskin a time of that intense strain which comes from hope alternately deferred, stimulated, and once more disappointed. There is a letter to W. H. Harrison, in which Ruskin says (1873):—

"Yes, those are weary words of the girl's to her lover. If you knew what has happened to *me*, of such kind—the sorrow of it increasing every day during the last ten years—into a story as sad as that of the Bride of Lammermoor,—you wouldn't wonder at mistakes in proof, sometimes. If I hadn't had good little Joanie to comfort me always, I shouldn't have been proving anything now, having proved everything—I fancy—of pain, contrivable by the Destinies in such matters. And they *can* weave a fine web, wrong side outwards."

Rosie's moods sometimes succeeded one another quickly. In 1870, as we have heard, she passed him and would not speak.<sup>1</sup> In the following year, her heart was opened for a time to a wider faith, and there was a reconciliation. But she was still irresolute. And, again, in 1872 there was the same succession of moods, as may be traced in Ruskin's diary:—

"(August 16, 1872.)—To-day came my consolation. I say 'to-day.' But it is two days past; for I could not write on the 14th, and scarcely since, for joy."

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 168.



CHAP. Then came a visit to the country, and the service in church  
XV. with Rosie on a day of perfect happiness.<sup>1</sup> But the break in the clouds was very brief:—

“(September 7.)—The ending day.”

“(September 8.)—Fallen and wicked and lost in all thought; must recover by work.”

Carlyle saw Ruskin shortly after the date of this last entry, and wrote to John Forster: “Ruskin good and affectionate; he has fallen into thick quiet despair again on the personal question; and meant all the more to go ahead with fire and sword upon the universal one.”<sup>2</sup> He turned to work; but when the clouds concealed the heaven, he felt, as he wrote to a friend, “as a ship’s captain who may not leave helm, but who shall never see land more; and sea only, not the sky.” His diaries and intimate letters show very poignantly the sorrows of his soul—

“All of them craving pity in sore suspense,  
Trembling with fears that the heart knoweth of.”

So wrote Dante in the *Vita Nuova*, and it is often of him that Ruskin’s confidences remind us. Many of his closest friends believed that he idealised his love, and that Rose was his Beatrice. So, I do not doubt, she was. It is Dante’s language that, consciously or unconsciously, he sometimes adopts in speaking of her. “Last Friday noon, my mistress looked at us and passed silently”; it is Beatrice denying to Dante her salutation. The *Vita Nuova* of Dante was being discussed on one occasion in the Corpus Common Room. Ruskin expressed with intensity his conviction that in that book we have “the record of the poet’s real love for a real person, and not a mere allegory, as some modern critics would have us believe.”<sup>3</sup> And to Ruskin himself, though he idealised his love, and was capable of the highest imaginative passion, the earthly embodiment of it was yet a present and a burning reality. “There are

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> “Ruskin at Corpus,” in the

<sup>2</sup> *New Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, Pelican Record, vol. ii. p. 136.  
1904, vol. ii. p. 293.

doubtless persons," he said in one of his lectures, "so lovely and constant of soul that their profane life is artificial to them, and the sacred one natural; whose thoughts are always at home when at their Father's feet, and whose pure lips are then purest when they utter His name. These, through their inmost being, are incapable of any false delight; to them every pulse of accidental passion joins with and deepens the steady current of their life."<sup>1</sup> Between this ideal and the lower levels of passion there are infinite gradations; and Ruskin, if he tended towards the higher plane, had not yet attained to the summit of the heavenly Mount. No visions of love in the celestial sphere recompensed him for its loss on earth. "*You*," he once wrote to Miss Susan Beever, "expect to see your Margaret again, and you will be happy with her in heaven. I wanted my Rosie *here*. In heaven I mean to go and talk to Pythagoras and Socrates and Valerius Publicola. I shan't care a bit for Rosie there, she needn't think it. What will grey eyes and red cheeks be good for *there*?" I have mentioned at the beginning of this book Ruskin's appreciation of the first stanza of "Mimnermus in Church." He asked me to send him more of Cory's poem, and I copied out the lines:—

"You bid me lift my mean desires  
From faltering lips and fitful veins  
To sexless souls, ideal quires,  
Unwearied voices, worldless strains:  
My mind with fonder welcome owns  
One dear dead friend's remembered tones.

Forsooth the present we must give  
To that which cannot pass away;  
All beauteous things for which we live  
By laws of time and space decay.  
But oh, the very reason why  
I clasp them, is because they die."

"Beautiful lines," he said; "so true of me also."

<sup>1</sup> *The Relation of National Ethics to National Art* (1867), § 20.

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The sky was for a brief space to be revealed, in unclouded blue as it might seem, before the end came. In the autumn of 1874 he had, as we have heard, "loveliest letters from Ireland." Rose came to London. "She has come back to me," he wrote to a friend, "finding she can't get on without some of the love she used to have." It was at this time that Ruskin made the pencil-drawing of her which is here given. At a later time, in a letter to a friend, he wrote this pen-picture:—

"Rose was tall and brightly fair, her face of the most delicately chiselled beauty—too severe to be entirely delightful to all people—the eyes grey and, when she was young, full of play; after the sad times came, the face became nobly serene—and of a strange beauty—so that once a stranger seeing her for the first time said 'she looked like a young sister of Christ's.'"<sup>1</sup>

The heaven was soon clouded. A frail body was unequal to the strain of a distraught mind. It was hoped for a while, as Ruskin wrote to Dr. Brown (Oct. 19, 1874), that "by peace and time" her "state might be redeemable." But it was not to be, and all that was left to her lover was to tend her in sickness. Miss La Touche died in May 1875. Before a tragedy such as this, silence is best. A French writer has said enough: "Il faut s'incliner bien bas devant ces deux âmes, assez fortes pour sacrifier, l'une sa vie, l'autre son bonheur, à la sincérité absolue. Le grande Corneille les aurait trouvées dignes de ses héros."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "John Ruskin in the 'Eighties," in the *Outlook*, October 21, 1899. A writer in the *Freeman's Journal* (November 27, 1906), in a notice of the death of Mrs. La Touche, describes her daughter as "a very lovely girl, with deep blue eyes, flaxen hair, exquisitely chiselled features, somewhat aquiline nose, and mouth indicative of firmness. She had chosen all knowledge for her province. She was brilliant in conversation, and had an encyclopædic memory. She

was moreover an accomplished horsewoman. In politics she was a convinced Radical. Miss La Touche was, indeed, in the judgment of the writer, one of the most delightful personalities of her generation." It will be noticed that there is some difference in the account of her eyes; doubtless, as one of the poets has it, they were "the greyest of things blue, the bluest of things grey."

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Bardoux, *John Ruskin*, p. 139.



Miss Rose La Touche  
From a Drawing by Ruskin, 1874





Ruskin's love-letters to Rose are not in existence. Communicative, expansive, un-reticent though Ruskin was, his literary executors felt that these letters, though perhaps the most beautiful things that he ever wrote, were too sacred for publicity. A letter from Rose to him, which he specially valued, he used to carry in his breast-pocket between plates of fine gold. After her death, he kept them all—his to her, and hers to him—in a rosewood box. On a day in autumn, Mrs. Severn and Professor Norton took them to the woodland garden above Brantwood, and gave them to the flames. A wind was blowing, and one letter fluttered away from the pyre. It was written from Brantwood, when Ruskin was first settling in his new home, and in it he wonders whether Rosie will ever give him the happiness of welcoming her there. But she never came to Brantwood. The garden, lake, and shore which became so dear to Ruskin were left without any memory of her presence, though often, as it seemed to him, graced by her spirit.

## II

Men do not die of broken hearts, and Ruskin sought comfort, not in vain regrets, but in earnest duty. The spirit in which he faced the final loss on earth was that which had animated him during the long years of trial. He records it in his diary:—

“(July 1, 1873.)—Yesterday, after reading *Romance of Rose*, thought much of the destruction of all my higher power of sentiment by late sorrow; and considered how far it might be possible to make love, though hopeless, still a guide and strength.”

And in the same spirit he wrote after her death to his friends:—

(To THOMAS CARLYLE.) “OXFORD, June 4.—I have had so little to say of myself, pleasing to a Papa's ear, that I neither wrote nor came when I was last in London—for the rest, the Academy work involved much weariness. I had just got it done, with other worldliness, and was away into the meadows, to see buttercup and

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clover and bean blossom, when the news came that the little story of my wild Rose was ended, and the hawthorn blossoms, this year, would fall—over her. Since which piece of news, I have not had a day but in more or less active business, in which everybody congratulates and felicitates me, and must be met with civil cheerfulness. Among the few rests or goods I get, indeed, the reading of the Knox's portraits has been the chief. I never saw a more close, inevitable piece of picture criticism; and the incidental sketches of Wishart and Knox are invaluable."

(To DR. JOHN BROWN.) "OXFORD, 18th June.—I am very thankful for your kind letter, chiefly in that it shows me I've got *you* still. I was afraid you would be overworking yourself again. That death is very bad for me—*seal* of a great fountain of sorrow which can never now ebb away; a dark lake in the fields of life as one looks back—Coruisk, with Sarcophagus Mountains round. Meanwhile I live in the outside of me and can still work. Glaciers going on well. *They* have become four first chapters of *Deucalion*, which is to be the Philosophy of Stones in *General*—after Venice! Soon, really, now, out with first chapter. The death numbed me for some days so that I couldn't work, but am none the worse, as far as I know, only there's no blood in my hands or feet. PLEASE take care of yourself—for *me*, as Mr. Winkle asked Mr. Pickwick for him."

In the anxiety of the early part of the year, Ruskin had felt unequal to public lecturing at Oxford, but he spent much time in his School. In March he kept an engagement to lecture at the London Institution, choosing as his subject "The Dynamic Condition of Glacial Action among the Alps." It was in this lecture (afterwards incorporated in *Deucalion*) that he described a glacier as "a tide which takes a year to rise, a cataract which takes fifty to fall, a torrent that is ribbed like a dragon, a rock that is diffused like a lake." In May he read a paper to the Metaphysical Society on "Social Policy based on Natural Selection,"<sup>1</sup> and he wrote a critique of the Royal Academy.<sup>2</sup> He kept up *Fors Clavigera* regularly, he had many other books in the press, and he prepared the formal

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 407.

constitution of his St. George's Guild. Later in the year he returned to Oxford; and in November delivered a course of lectures entitled *Studies in the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds*. These lectures contain much that is felicitous and just in regard to their professed subject; but the *Discourses* formed little more than a starting-point for the lecturer's excursions in many and various directions. The lectures were less formal and less prepared than any others of his Oxford series, and the free and easy manner which he adopted in them occasionally verged on the grotesque. "In the decorous atmosphere of a University lecture-room," writes Dean Kitchin, "the strangest things befell; for example, in a splendid passage of the Psalms of David he was reminded of an anthem by Mendelssohn, lately rendered in one of the College chapels, in which the solemn dignity of the Psalms was lowered by the frivolous prettiness of the music. It was 'Oh! for the wings of a dove' that he had heard with disgust, and he suddenly began to dance and recite, with the strangest flappings of his M.A. gown, and the oddest look on his excited face. The Oxford musicians were furious, though indeed his criticism was just enough."<sup>1</sup> One of the lectures, starting from I know not what point in the *Discourses* of Reynolds, was on the Spanish Chapel in S. Maria Novella at Florence, and this was repeated with some variations at Eton on November 27. "To those who had heard him before, the lecturer seemed to have lost no whit," says the Minute in the archives of the Eton Literary and Scientific Society, "of his grace and tenderness; while nothing could exceed the enthusiasm of those who were at last enabled to realise what they had but been able to guess from his published lectures—his wonderful power and beauty of expression combined with a sublimity of thought, which rendered every word he spoke of surpassing interest even to the superficial hearer." In the spring of 1876 he lectured twice at the London Institution on Precious Stones (a lecture

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<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, p. 41. A similar account of the incident is given in "Ruskin as an Oxford Lecturer," by J. M. Bruce, in *The Century Magazine*, Feb. 1898.



CHAP. incorporated in *Deucalion*), and he repeated one of the  
 XV. lectures both at Woolwich and to the boys of Christ's Hospital.

Another work which occupied much of Ruskin's time in 1875-76 was the *Mornings in Florence*, planned during his sojourn there in 1874. M. de la Sizeranne introduces his charming study of Ruskin with a description of a party of English girls, whom he encountered on the Feast of S. Thomas Aquinas in the Spanish Chapel of S. Maria Novella, standing reverently before the fresco of the Sciences, while one of them read from a little book words "which seemed like a tuft of flowers springing from the dust of the past."<sup>1</sup> It was one of the "Mornings in Florence" that was being read, and the thin parts of this guide-book, pleasantly bound in red and gold and easily pocketable, became as familiar a companion to the tourist in Florence as Baedeker itself.

### III

Such was the work with which Ruskin confronted his sorrow. He did not wear his grief on his sleeve, and those who met him found him as lively and affable as before. A diversion which gave him pleasure at this period was that of posting tours to Derbyshire and Yorkshire.<sup>2</sup> These expeditions, on which Ruskin and Mr. Severn sketched together, must have been wholly good for Ruskin if they were as breezy as the account of one of them given by Mr. Severn:—

"The Professor went so far that he actually built a carriage for the drive. It was a regular posting carriage, with good strong

<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin et la Religion de la Beauté*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of January 1875 he drove by himself through Brantwood to Yorkshire and Derbyshire (see *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 50, 52), returning to London. In July 1875 he drove again, this time

with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, through Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and thence to Brantwood. And again in April 1876 from London to Sheffield, and thence to Brantwood (see *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 66, "Notes and Correspondence").

wheels, a place behind for the luggage, and cunning drawers inside for all kinds of things we might want on the journey. The Professor took a portable chessboard, and over some long, and, to him, rather wearisome Yorkshire moors we used to play games of chess.”

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And so they rode to Sheffield. His plans for a “St. George’s Museum” at Sheffield were now beginning to take shape, and he spent some days there in meeting many local people and discussing the matter with them. When this business was finished, the journey was resumed:—

“Then the Professor gave orders that the carriage should be got ready to take us on our journey. We were to start after luncheon, and sure enough there was the carriage at the door, and a still more gorgeous postilion than any we had had so far on our journey. His riding-breeches were of the whitest and tightest I ever saw. His horses were an admirable pair and looked like going. A very large crowd had assembled outside the inn to see what extraordinary kind of mortals could be going to travel in such a way. ‘Well, Professor,’ I said, ‘I really don’t know what the people expect—whether it’s a bride and bridegroom, or what.’ He said, ‘Well, Arthur, you and Joan shall play at being bride and bridegroom inside the carriage, and I will get out on the box.’ He got hold of Mrs. Severn by the arm and put her into the carriage; I was put in after, and he jumped upon the box. The crowd closed in around us and looked at us as if we were a sort of menagerie.”<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes information picked up on the road was disillusioning. They had made a deviation to see Hardraw Fall, one of Turner’s subjects in the *Richmondshire* Series, and Mr. Severn, who had gone on in front, fell into conversation with a countryman:—

“Mr. Severn expressed his surprise that so large and powerful a body of water did not wear away the edge of the cliff much more. The man, with an amused smile, said, ‘To tell you the truth, sir, it does wear it away, only you see we work at it.’ ‘Work at it?’ ‘Yes, build it up again. You will see mason’s work, sir, if you go

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<sup>1</sup> Report of a speech, at the opening of the Ruskin Museum, in the *Sheffield Independent*, April 16, 1890.

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to the top of the cliff and look close.' 'You will meet a gentleman and a lady a little farther on,' said Mr. Severn; 'I wish you would tell this to the gentleman, he would be so interested!' 'Arthur! Arthur!' exclaimed Ruskin when he joined Mr. Severn at the fall shortly afterwards, 'how could you do such a cruel thing as make that man tell me about the waterfall? I shall never care for it again!' " <sup>1</sup>

#### IV

The deeper currents of Ruskin's life at this time flowed elsewhere. In October and again in December 1875 he visited Mr. and Mrs. Cowper Temple at Broadlands. Mrs. Cowper Temple, the *φίλη* of *Sesame and Lilies*, the "Isola" <sup>2</sup> of his intimate letters, had been the confidante of Ruskin's romance, and when the end came she begged him to let her surround him as with a mother's care. "It is so precious to me," he wrote in reply (Aug. 10, 1875), "to be thought of as a child and needing to be taken care of, in the midst of the weary sense of teaching and having all things and creatures depending on one,—and one's self, a nail stuck in an insecure place." So he went to Broadlands, and his friends interested themselves in his pursuits, as he relates in a letter to Mrs. Severn:—

"(October 20.)—Things are going nicely with me—*φίλη* has an angelic cook . . . who does everything I want, and we're making experiments on the glaciers, in the kitchen with jelly and cream and blanc-mange, and I got two quite terrific crevasses opened to-day which William and *φίλη* were there to see."

Culinary experiments in geology were a favourite diversion with Ruskin. A neighbour at Coniston describes "the Professor rushing in from the kitchen with his usual affectionate greeting, but without his coat, and with traces of flour

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Alfred Hunt, in her edition of Turner's *Richmondshire*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> "I gave her that name," said Ruskin, "because she is so unapproachable" — unapproachable,

that is, by ordinary roads, but "open on all sides to waifs of the waves, claiming haven and rest in her sympathy" (*Ruskin Relics*, p. 225).

whitening his clothes. He had been engaged in a study of contorted strata by means of alternate layers of cochineal-stained pink and white pie-paste, which being rolled tightly down in three successive layers, were then compressed laterally and cut across with a knife.”<sup>1</sup>

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At this time, however, there were other experiments than those with glacier-cream. Broadlands at this time was a home of spiritualistic manifestation. Perhaps this is a region in which the will to believe is an essential condition of belief, and Ruskin was now in a mood to lend himself, not unwillingly, to experiments. His friend was eagerly persuaded that the partition between the life of this world and the spirit world was impenetrable only to the hard in heart. Gradually the conviction was borne in upon him also. He notes the conclusive dates in letters and in entries in his diary:—

(To C. E. NORTON.) “BROADLANDS, 14th December. . . . I have heard wonderful things this very afternoon. I have seen a person who has herself had the Stigmata, and lives as completely in the other world as ever St. Francis did, from her youth up, and—this is for *you*—she had the wounds more than once, but on one occasion conveyed instantly by a relic of St. Catherine of Siena. And I’m as giddy as if I had been thrown off Strasburg steeple and stopped in the air; but thing after thing of this kind is being brought to me. I can’t write more to-night.”

“December 18.—Increasing anxiety about illness, and more and more wonderful or sad things told me unfit me much for my work. . . . Mrs. W— sees me in evening, *φίλη* throwing her into trance, tells me all things that ever I did.”

“December 20.—Again, first through *φίλη* and her friend, then conclusively in evening talk after reading, the truth is shown to me, which, though blind, I have truly sought,—so long.”

(To C. E. NORTON.) “BROADLANDS, 1 February, 1876. . . . I am being brought every day now into new work and new thoughts, and, whether I will or no, into closer contact with evidence of an altered phase of natural, if not supernatural, phenomena, the more

<sup>1</sup> Rev. F. A. Malleson, in *Leisure Hour*, 1895, p. 762.



CHAP. helpful to me, because I can compare now, with clear knowledge,  
 XV. the phase of mind in which J. S. and other noble Deists or infidels are, and in which I have been for ten years, with that which I am now analysing in the earlier Florentines, and recognizing in some living Catholics. To me, personally, it is no common sign that just after the shade of Rose was asserted to have been seen beside Mrs. T. and beside me, here, I should recover the most precious of the letters she ever wrote me which, returned to her when we parted, she had nevertheless kept. . . .”

What was this truth and how much of it was shown to him, and in what guise? Frederic Myers, who was of the company at Broadlands and whom Ruskin presently visited at Cambridge, has told us something of the revelation:—

“Chiefliest I think of him in that house of high thoughts where his interest in our inquiry first upgrew. For the introduction to the new hope came to him, as to Edmund Gurney and to myself, through a lady whom each of us held in equal honour; and it was on the stately lawns of Broadlands, and in that air as of Sabbatical repose, that Ruskin enjoyed his one brief season,—since the failure of his youthful Christian confidence,—of blissful trust in the Unseen. To one among that company a vision came,—as of a longed-for meeting of souls beloved in heaven,—a vision whose detail and symbolism carried conviction to Ruskin’s heart. While that conviction abode with him he was happy as a child; but presently he suffered what all are like to suffer who do not keep their minds close pressed to actual evidence by continuous study. That impress faded; and leaving the unseen world in its old sad uncertainty, he went back to the mission of humanising this earth, and being humanised thereby, which our race must needs accomplish, whatever be the last doom of man.”

Myers goes on to relate how “half in jest I would complain to him that to earth he gave up what was meant for Infinity, and bent a cosmic passion upon this round wet pebble of rock and sea. ‘Ah, my friend!’ he answered once when I spoke of life to come, ‘if you could only give me fifty years longer of this life on earth, I would ask for nothing more!’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, by F. W. H. Myers, pp. 90, 91.

The vision, then—granted not to Ruskin, but to another—was doomed to fade; he had heard something from the spirit world of fulfilled Love, but he sought not to peer further beyond the veil. He turned back, here on earth, to “Duty loved of Love.” Yet much remained to him from these experiences and thoughts at Broadlands. The conviction and the hope, there borne in upon him, strengthened the religious development which I have traced during his sojourn at Assisi. Faith in the very real presence of ministering spirits coloured much of his later writing. The practical bent of his mind, the good sense in which he interpreted that faith, are shown in a beautiful letter to a girl friend: <sup>1</sup>—

“AYLESBURY, 17th August, '76.—I am so very thankful for all, but chiefly for the last part of your letter, in which you speak of feeling the angels nearer you. It is strange that this letter of yours should come to me and be read this morning in the room in which I received the tidings of her death, a year and a half ago. If *anything* is true of what all good and noble Christians have believed, it is true that we not only may, but should pray to the saints, as simply as we should ask them to do anything for us while they were alive. Do but Feel that they ARE alive and love us still, and that they have powers of influencing us by their love and wisdom, and what else *can* we do? I should like you to think of Rose as a perfectly pure and innocent friend, who could, and only besought to be permitted to, teach you and inspire you in all things relating to feelings about which you have had no other adviser. One of your greatest charms to me was your tender hearing of her and your belief in the vision of her. I think it is very likely she may speak to *you*, when she will not to me—or cannot. I cannot tell you why I think this, but I do, very earnestly. Do not permit yourself to be disturbed by the so often repeated foolish saying that we should never go to any one but God. Of course such a principle would take living friends from you more swiftly than dead ones, being less pure. It is the greater sanctity and power of the ‘Cloud of Witnesses’ which makes simple people

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Sara Anderson, an intimate friend and a frequent visitor at Brantwood, where she helped Ruskin in secretarial duties.

CHAP. XV. fancy they are idolatrous in addressing them instead of Christ. But they are all as the Angel who *talked* with John—but when he would have worshipped him, said, 'See thou do it not.' It is strange that I was reading yesterday with extreme care the two sonnets of Guido Guinicelli at p. 273 of the Cary's *Dante* which I send you by this same post; I should like you to read these, and the 30th, 31st, and 33rd canto of the *Purgatory*, in my own book, but you must send it back to me when the one comes I have ordered for you. There is one thing I am sure both Rose and Beatrice would say—and Dante, now he is with them—that in *this* day of the dark world, no one who loves truly should think of being happy *here*; that we are called upon to labour and to wait—being sure of joy, such as we know not, and need not know, till it is revealed to us by the Spirit. I can't write less gravely from this place, dear; but all your letter is delightful to me."

One of the poems which Ruskin had been reading is this:—

" 'Comfort thee, comfort thee,' exclaimeth Love;  
 And Pity by thy God adjures thee 'rest':  
 Oh then incline ye to such gentle prayer;  
 Nor Reason's plea should ineffectual prove,  
 Who bids ye lay aside this dismal vest:  
 For man meets death through sadness and despair.  
 Amongst you ye have seen a face so fair:  
 Be this in mortal mourning some relief.  
 And, for more balm of grief,  
 Rescue thy spirit from its heavy load,  
 Remembering thy God;  
 And that in heaven thou hopest again to share  
 In sight of her, and with thine arms to fold:  
 Hope then; nor of this comfort quit thy hold."

The mistress of his heart was identified, in his imagination, now with St. Ursula of Venice, and now, more definitely than before, with the Beatrice of Dante. The 2nd of February—the day on which Rose had fixed his period of probation—became a sacred day with him:—

"(VENICE, 1877.)—Eleven years, then, to-day, I have waited. How wonderful, the slow sadness! yet so fast! How weary the

three seemed, half over ; the eleven, what a dream ! . . . Dreaming of pictures by R. in sweet mosaic colour, of signs from her ; but all confused and vague in waking. I recollect saying as I looked at the drawing, ‘ Ah, what a creature lost ! ’ I did not mean lost to myself, but to the world.”

And so in *Fors Clavigera* of the same date he wrote : “ It is eleven years to-day since the 2nd of February became a great festival to me : now, like all the days of all the years, a shadow ; deeper, this, in a beautiful shade.” As the years of waiting lengthened, the lady whom he loved came perhaps “ apparell’d in more precious habit,” and the pang of parting was so far assuaged that he could speak freely of his loss and his hope. To some intimates among his men friends, he used to talk of Rose ; and to sympathetic women not a few he would open his heart very unreservedly. It is pleasant to know that the estrangement, not unmixed with bitterness on his side, between Ruskin and Rose’s mother was healed by time. Mr. and Mrs. La Touche were in his later years honoured guests at Brantwood, and her letters were among those which he valued most. He did not die, then, of a broken heart ; but it can hardly be doubted that the strain placed upon his emotions by the chequered course of this romance was one of the elements which contributed to overthrow his mental balance. He himself, in describing to a friend the course of his first attack, associated it expressly with imagined visions of his lost love.



## CHAPTER XVI

### HOME LIFE AT BRANTWOOD

(1872-1876)

"My own complete satisfaction would have been in buying every Turner drawing I could afford, and passing quiet days at Brantwood, between my garden and my gallery, praised, as I should have been, by all the world, for doing good to myself. I do not doubt, had God condemned me to that selfishness, He would also have inflicted on me the curse of happiness in it. But He has led me by other ways."—*Fors Clavigera*, April 1877.

#### I

"DEAR SIR JOHN,—And will you *really* come? It's so wonderful to think you can forgive me all the ill-tempered things I've said about insects and evolution and—everything nearly that you've been most interested in—and will see the Lake Country first from my terrace—where, however, Darwin has walked also. And it *is* a terrace—a mere nook of turf above a nest of garden—but commanding such a piece of lake and hill as can only be seen in England. I shall be here all the year, and whenever you can prevail on Lady Lubbock to seclude herself from the world—(there is not a house south of us on either side the lake for four miles)—and on Miss Lubbock to take up her quarrel where we broke off—irreconcilable—you will find Brantwood gate wide on its furthest hinges to you. You will have to put up with cottage fare—and perhaps—with a couple of days' rain;—I have only a country cook—and when it rains here, it does not know how to stop. For the rest, if you come when the roses are yet in bloom and the heather in the bud, you will not be disappointed in Wordsworth's land.—Ever affectionately yours."

So Ruskin wrote to Sir John Lubbock. The letter belongs to a decade later than the time at which this story has yet

arrived; but it may stand as typical of the pretty invitations which the master of Brantwood sent at all times to his friends. Let us accept the invitation, and spend a day with Ruskin in his Lakeland home. He had bought the place in 1871, as we have heard, without seeing it; but the more he saw of it, the better he liked it, and it was soon brought into sufficient order to receive his guests:<sup>1</sup>—

“A short drive, over which the shady trees almost meet, and the visitor has come from the high-road up to the house, the entrance to which might seem somewhat gloomy were it not for the glimpses of blue lake he catches here and there. Pause in the hall a few minutes if you would see two figures by Burne-Jones before you pass to the cheerful drawing-room. Here, since its windows look on the lake, the pleasant breakfast-table is brought in daily, and Mr. Ruskin’s guests enjoy the Brantwood strawberries and the cream from the farm across the hill, while their host, who has breakfasted already and been writing *Proserpina* or *Deucalion*, or whatever is in hand, almost since sunrise, reads aloud now the results of his morning’s work, courting criticism instead of being offended at it like smaller men; now some extracts from the letters which have just come; and now, when the meal is nearly over, he opens a book reserved for this occasion, and the party are treated to no common reading of one of Scott’s novels. Here, in the evening, when they have watched the sunset splendour pass from crimson into grey till the mountain ridges stand out sharp and black against the star-bright sky, all reassemble—some from the lake’s shore, where a cigarette has been secretly smoked, while the Professor, who does not like any sign of tobacco near him, has been taking his after-dinner nap—and the day’s last hours are spent in lively talk or at chess, a game of which Mr. Ruskin is fond, and at which he is not unskilful. Sometimes a book—one of Miss Edgeworth’s old-fashioned stories, perhaps—is taken up and read aloud, as at breakfast, the others sitting at the chess-board or making sketches in pen and ink, while the best of hostesses and kindest of cousins does a woman’s duty at the tea-table.

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<sup>1</sup> The following account is taken at Home, No. LIV. Professor from the *World* of August 29, Ruskin at Brantwood.” The article 1877; it was headed “Celebrities was written by Mr. Wedderburn.

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"Across the hall the dining-room is entered, and here the eye lights on two portraits by Northcote, over the sideboard, of Mr. Ruskin's parents; whilst in the same room are two 'Annunciations,' both by Tintoret, and, to omit the rest, there hangs above the chimneypiece Turner's portrait of himself in youth, and we see that the mouth which was afterwards sensual was once softly sweet. But it is in the 'Professor's study' that those who would know of Mr. Ruskin at home must be most interested. The room is long and low, with two large windows opening out upon the lake. At one end is the fireplace, over which is hung Turner's 'Lake of Geneva,' a water-colour remarkable for its splendour and unusual size; at the other is the occupant's writing-table. The walls are covered with book-cases and cabinets rather than with pictures. Here are the original MSS. of the *Fortunes of Nigel* and a volume of Scott's letters; here a Fielding on large paper and an edition of Plato by a distinguished divine have honourable place; here some specimens of the binder's art and the best that printing can do; and humbly hidden here behind some other volumes are copies, kept for reference or for gift, of the Works of John Ruskin. . . . This cabinet contains, admirably arranged on variously coloured velvets, the half of Mr. Ruskin's valuable collection of minerals, the greater part of which was once the property of the Duke of Buckingham at Stowe. These drawers are full of illuminated missals and fine old manuscripts (though the best, perhaps, lie in the Professor's rooms at Corpus); and here is a cabinet filled with drawings, not a few by Turner, which it would take long to enjoy. . . . As a host Mr. Ruskin possesses that uncommon faculty of making his guests forget that his house is not their own. To its favoured frequenters Brantwood is Liberty Hall indeed; perfect freedom is allowed them in all they do; and they are not bound to follow out plans laid down in a series of programmes for their supposed amusement, though, if the day be fine, the Professor will take an oar and pull across the lake to show them the old Hall, now a farm, which was once the home of Mary, Countess of Pembroke, and where her brother 'Sir Philip Sidney, it is delivered by tradition, lived for a time in our Arcadia of western meres.'<sup>1</sup> Gathered round the pleasantest of tables, the inmates

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<sup>1</sup> Preface (§ 1) to *Rock Honeycomb* in *Bibliotheca Pastorum*.

of Brantwood enjoy the freest 'flow of soul'; their host directs and sustains, but never monopolises, the talk; nor need any be afraid of being victimised by that spirit of self-conscious dictation or affected silence which has been known to spoil enjoyment in the company of some literary men.

"Mr. Ruskin rises early, as we have said, and writes for three hours before his guests are down. Breakfast over, he retires to his study, or will go out on to the hill, perhaps, and make a delicately-finished study of rock and grass for the engraver's hand to copy. Between one and six o'clock, the tourist in the Lakes may see a slight figure dressed in a grey frock-coat, wearing the bright blue tie so familiar to audiences at Oxford and elsewhere, walking about the quiet lanes, sitting down by the harbour's side, or rowing on the water. The back is somewhat bent, the light-brown hair straight and long, the whiskers scarcely showing signs of eight-and-fifty summers, and the spectator need not be surprised at the determined energy with which a boat is brought to shore or pushed out into the lake."

A few details may be added to the picture. At the chess-board Ruskin himself would often be seated. Indeed, from his boyhood to the verge of extreme old age, he was a great lover of chess. An attentive reader might guess as much from analogies drawn from the game in Ruskin's books, and occasional references to masters.<sup>1</sup> He himself played, says a friend, "with great rapidity and considerable brilliancy. At one time he was a constant visitor to the Maskelyne and Cooke entertainment, where on at least one occasion he took a hand in the rubber with 'Psycho'; and whenever a new chess-playing automaton made a public appearance he would endeavour to try conclusions with it."<sup>2</sup> He was a Vice-President of the British Chess Association, and "endowed the national tournaments with a set of his works—a prize much coveted by the competitors and valued by the winners."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, in the Library Edition, vol. vi. p. 85; vol. xiii. pp. 259, 272; vol. xix. p. 466; vol. xxxii. p. 492.

<sup>2</sup> *John Ruskin*, by M. H. Spielmann, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> From the Chess Column of the *Westminster Gazette*, January 27, 1900.



CHAP. He was impatient with an opponent who did not play  
XVI. quickly. The squares on his own board were coloured red and green.

Ruskin was attached and courteous to his servants, and they in return considered his moods and tastes. A friend relates how one evening at Brantwood the maid came in and said, "Please, sir, there is a beautiful sky just now over the Old Man." The Professor rose from his chair and said, "Thank you, Kate, for telling us." "Yes," he said, after leaving the room and returning, "it is worth seeing," and led the way upstairs. During dinner, a visitor happened to say that the rhubarb was the first he had tasted that season and was delicious. Ruskin rang the bell and sent for Jackson. "I am very pleased to tell you, Jackson," he said, "that your first pulling of rhubarb is quite a success, and my friend here says it is delicious." At Oxford his breakfasts, as is the way with the College breakfasts, were ample beyond all appetite of host or guest. Ruskin, fearing to disappoint the College cook, would send out friendly or appreciative messages. "A very nice relish for breakfast," said the scout, offering some particular dish. "A very nice relish at any time," said Ruskin, kindly refusing, "and tell the cook I said so." Of his gardener, Downs, we have already heard; as also of his successive valets.

The house at Brantwood, when Ruskin bought it, was, he says, "a mere shed of rotten timber and loose stone"; of the furnishing and repairing he gave this account:—

"For old acquaintance' sake, I went to my father's upholsterer in London (instead of the country Coniston one, as I ought) and had five pounds charged me for a footstool; the repairs also proving worse than complete rebuilding. I got myself at last settled at my tea-table, one summer evening, with my view of the lake—for a net four thousand pounds all told. I afterwards built a lodge nearly as big as the house, for a married servant, and cut and terraced a kitchen garden out of the 'steep wood'—another two thousand transforming themselves thus into 'utilities embodied in material objects'; but these latter operations, under my own

immediate direction, turning out approvable by neighbours, and, I imagine, not unprofitable as investment.”<sup>1</sup>

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Those five pounds seem to have rankled, for the same footstool is given a kick in another place,<sup>2</sup> where Ruskin describes how the British landlord takes the food from the ground of his estate and carries it to London, where he feeds with it a vast number of dressmakers, grooms, footmen, bad musicians, bad painters, upholsterers, and other abandoned characters. The furniture of Brantwood was for the most part old-fashioned “Victorian,” and its master took occasion to answer a question often asked about him by the æsthetic cliques of London—

“why, in the pictures they have seen of my home, there is no attempt whatever to secure harmonies of colour, or form, in furniture. My answer is, that I am entirely independent for daily happiness upon the sensual qualities of form or colour; that, when I want them, I take them either from the sky or the fields, not from my walls, which might be either whitewashed, or painted like a harlequin’s jacket, for aught I care; but that the slightest incident which interrupts the harmony of *feeling* and association in a landscape, destroys it all to me, poisoning the entire faculty of contemplation. From my dining-room, I am happy in the view of the lower reach of Coniston Water, not because it is particularly beautiful, but because it is entirely pastoral and pure. Were a single point of chimney of the Barrow ironworks to show itself over the green ridge of the hill, I should never care to look at it more.”<sup>3</sup>

Much of the furniture came from Denmark Hill; what was good enough for his father, Ruskin used to say, was good enough for him. He took some pains, however, about a wall-paper for his study at Brantwood. He had been struck in the National Gallery with the beauty of a pattern on a greyish-white damask sleeve in the large “Circumcision” by Marco Marziale. He commissioned Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 76  
(“Notes and Correspondence”).

<sup>3</sup> Preface to the rearranged  
edition of *Modern Painters*, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter 44.

CHAP. William Ward to paint it, and had his paper made from  
XVI. the copy. "I continually notice the bees at Brantwood," he said, "flying rapturously up to the flowers on my wall-paper, and knocking themselves against them, again and again, unconvincible of their fallacy; and it is no compliment to the wall-paper or the artist, neither—for the flowers are only conventional ones, copied from a radiant Bishop's cloak of the fifteenth century."<sup>1</sup>

Garden-planning was a great delight to Ruskin at Brantwood. The house is terraced above the lake-side, and behind it the woods rise sharply to the moorland. The visitor who went for an afternoon ramble with his host would be taken, if in spring time, through a mist of wild hyacinths, to a clearing in the wood, where, at "Fairfield Scat," a view of the lake and mountains bursts open; or, if in autumn, up to the moor, bright with heather and bracken, and rich in wild raspberries and strawberries. It was here that Ruskin attempted to reclaim a portion of the moorland, in order to show what might be done in bringing wild places under cultivation. The planting of corn was his first experiment, but, this not proving successful, the ground is now occupied by fruit-trees. Further down the hill was a woodland garden, at one time his special resort. He gave some account of his reclamation works to the Companions of St. George's Guild:—

"I have myself taken in hand the small bit of moor which overtops my wood. . . . The piece of living landscape will cost perhaps the fifth part of a Turner drawing, and will need no insurance against fire, nor since its drainage is rightly secured, much against rain. . . . I am carrying step by step down the hill a series of little garden grounds, of which, judging by the extreme fruitfulness of the piece of the same slope already made the main garden of Brantwood, a season or two will show the value to my farmer neighbours, and very sufficiently explain the future function of St. George's Guild in British mountain ground of ordinary character."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Master's Report*, 1881, and *General Statement*, 1882.

Ruskin was fond of taking a turn with the spade himself; but his constant form of manual exercise was wood-chopping, and here Brantwood gave him plenty of opportunity. "I am always busy," he said, "for a good part of the day in my wood." And here is an account rendered to members of the St. George's Guild:—

"*Affairs of the Master* :—I have nothing interesting to communicate under this head, except that I have been very busy clearing my wood, and chopping up its rotten sticks into faggots;—that I am highly satisfied with the material results of this amusement; and shall be able to keep the smoke from my chimneys this winter of purer blue than usual, at less cost." <sup>1</sup>

This was a habit which Ruskin carried abroad with him, and he was sometimes caught in the act in unlikely places. A friend encountered him with hatchet in hand in the courtyard of his hotel at Venice (1876–7). "What are you at," inquired the friend—"preparing to execute summary justice on the assassins of artistic Venice?" "No, no, dear friend," said Ruskin; "I am cutting wood. Allow me"—and he went on splitting logs for firewood with the greatest ease and naturalness. "When he had set me a sufficient example," says the friend, "he invited me to his room; and as we went upstairs he advised me to take exercise in the same way, assuring me that he had found it very beneficial." <sup>2</sup> Sometimes he took his gospel of manual labour with him also on visits to his friends. "He set us all to manual work," wrote Lady Mount-Temple, in recording one of Ruskin's visits to Broadlands; "he himself undertook to clean out the fountain in the garden, and made us all, from Juliet <sup>3</sup> to Mr. Russell Gurney, pick up the fallen wood and make it up into bundles of faggots for the poor." <sup>4</sup>

Of the pleasure which Ruskin took in the flowers, and especially the wild flowers, of Brantwood, every reader of

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 83 ("Notes and Correspondence").

<sup>2</sup> "Ruskin at Venice," by Count Zorzi, *Cornhill Magazine*, Aug. 1906.

<sup>3</sup> Madame Deschamps (Lady Mount-Temple's adopted daughter).

<sup>4</sup> *Ruskin Relics*, p. 226, quoted from Lady Mount-Temple's privately printed volume of *Memorials*.



CHAP. *Proserpina* is aware. In such studies he had constant  
 XVI. sympathy from Miss Susan Beever, who from 1874 onwards filled a large part in Ruskin's home life. She and her sister lived on the other side of the lake, within an easy walk or an easier row from Brantwood. It was she whom he permitted in 1875 to make the popular volume of extracts from *Modern Painters* which he called *Fronde Agrestes*; and a selection of his letters to her and her sister has been printed in the volume called *Hortus Inclusus: Messages from the Wood to the Garden, sent in happy days to the Sister Ladies of the Thwaite, Coniston*. In his Preface to that book Ruskin sketches, in a few deft touches, the character of his friends, and surrounds their mountain home with a tender and idyllic charm. The garden of the Thwaite was rich in all old-fashioned flowers, and there were fruit-trees in abundance—for the birds more than for their mistress.<sup>1</sup> This is a side of Miss Beever's nature with which Ruskin's correspondence makes us familiar. For the rest, his letters to "Susie" are often trivial, though many among them contain passages of beautiful description or brightly glancing humour. They require to be read with an understanding of the playful intimacy and little language of affection (including, for instance, an agreement to count their years backwards) with which Ruskin loved to amuse and cheer his aged friend; she was already sixty-eight when Ruskin first made her acquaintance. Thus read, the letters of *Hortus Inclusus* will, I think, convey, even to those outside the pleasaunce, a sense of Ruskin's gracious ways and kindly wisdom.

The lake and his harbour were as much a delight to Ruskin as the garden and the fells. "He liked going out when there was a little sea on, and white horses, and he would paddle away before the wind with great enjoyment."<sup>2</sup> At first he had no harbour, and the boats were exposed to the storms, which can be wild enough, when they give their mind to it, on Coniston Water. So the construction of a breakwater was one of the master of Brantwood's first

<sup>1</sup> There is a pretty account, with a view, of Miss Beever's garden in the Rev. W. Tuckwell's *Tongues in Trees*.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *Ruskin Relics*, p. 18.

concerns. He referred to it in an Oxford lecture on the relation of ornament to structure :—

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“I have been building a little pier into Coniston Lake, and various walls and terraces in a steeply sloping garden, all which had to be constructed of such rough stones as lay nearest. Under the dextrous hands of a neighbour farmer’s son, the pier projected, and the walls rose, as if enchanted; every stone taking its proper place, and the loose dyke holding itself as firmly upright as if the gripping cement of the Florentine towers had fastened it. My own better acquaintance with the laws of gravity and of statics did not enable me, myself, to build six inches of dyke that would stand; and all the decoration possible under the circumstances consisted in turning the lichened sides of the stones outwards. And yet the noblest conditions of building in the world are nothing more than the gradual adornment, by plays of the imagination, of materials first arranged by this natural instinct of adjustment. You must not lose sight of the instinct of building, but you must not think the play of the imagination depends upon it. Intelligent laying of stones is always delightful; but the fancy must not be limited to its contemplation.”<sup>1</sup>

At a later date (1875) two of his Oxford pupils and diggers, Mr. Collingwood and Mr. Wedderburn—the translators of Xenophon’s *Economist* for *Bibliotheca Pastorum*—were invited to Brantwood to go through that book with him, and the harbour-digging became one form of their daily exercise. They enclosed a small piece of the lake and then deepened it, to allow of the boats coming in, and also built steps up the bank to the garden-path. Ruskin often joined them in the harbour-making; and though, later on, a local mason was called in to finish the work and make an inner harbour, the work of the Oxford diggers still stands.

## II

Some of the works and occupations, above described, belong to later years; but already in 1873 Brantwood was ready for guests, and Ruskin received many. Early in the

<sup>1</sup> *Val d’Arno*, § 142.

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year came Lady Burne-Jones, and her daughter, with whom Ruskin "played at jumping over piles of books that he built upon the floor."<sup>1</sup> Other children of whom Ruskin saw much at this time were the daughters of Mr. Alfred Hunt, who came with his wife to stay at Brantwood, and afterwards settled for a time in Coniston. "Venice" (Mrs. W. Benson) was his godchild, and Ruskin was at one time minded to adopt her. Miss Violet Hunt has some pleasant reminiscences of these days at Brantwood:—

"Ruskin loved children, but in his play with us he called for the exercise of that forbearance towards its well-meaning but blundering elder which is innate in all children. We thought 'J. R.' charmingly unpractical. Mr. Ruskin used to take us out nutting in the woods, carrying an axe to cut down the trees, so that we should be able to reach the nuts. We disapproved of the plan; nuts so easily gotten lost all their savour. . . . Then he played hide-and-seek with us, and I remember how the word went round among the three little conspirators to spare the Professor's feelings and not find him too readily. I can see now his slim back lying spread out on a rock near the waterfall, looking like a great trout that had somehow got on to the bank, in the full view of six sharp eyes, that politely ignored him for a time. Being full of hero-worship, and anxious to ascertain from him his views on every subject whatsoever—a pleasure in which my sisters were as yet too young to share—I used to prefer a *tête-à-tête* walk. His little bow of assent when I timidly asked him flattered the woman in the child. I remember saying as we set out one Saturday: 'Mr. Ruskin, before we start, do tell me if we shall be asked to come here again next Saturday.' 'Certainly,' he said, 'but why should you think of that now? Sufficient for the day is the happiness thereof.' 'No,' I said courageously—I was only eleven—'I can be so much happier to-day if I know it is not the last—if I know I am going to be happy another day—if this day is only a *piece* of happiness, not the whole of it.' 'Poor child,' he said, in a tone of intense commiseration which I could not understand then, though I do now."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii. p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> "Ruskin as a Guide to Youth:" *Westminster Gazette*, Feb. 3, 1900.

Miss Violet Hunt tells me how well she remembers Ruskin describing to her what he saw from his bedroom windows—"all the mountains of the earth passing in procession, with the Coniston Old Man at their head."

Presently Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn were established at Brantwood. "Yesterday," he notes (July 3), "Joanna and Arthur and baby arrive all safe—to my great comfort and, I think, theirs." Other children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Severn as the years passed, and they became one of the pleasures of Ruskin's home life. He lived at Brantwood, he said, "not without help from children who, though not mine, have been cared for as if they were."<sup>1</sup> In books and lectures of his later period Ruskin sometimes uses their ways and fancies to illustrate his points. For instance, in a passage on the principles of "Fairy Land":—

"One of the most curious proofs of the need to children of this exercise of the inventive and believing power,—the *besoin de croire*, which precedes the *besoin d'aimer*,—you will find in the way you destroy the vitality of a toy to them, by bringing it too near the imitation of life. You never find a child make a pet of a mechanical mouse that runs about the floor—of a poodle that yelps—of a tumbler who jumps upon wires. . . . My little—ever-so-many-times-grand—cousin, Lily, took a bit of stick with a round knob at the end of it for her doll one day;—nursed it through any number of illnesses with the most tender solicitude; and, on the deeply-important occasion of its having a new night-gown made for it, bent down her mother's head to receive the confidential and timid whisper—'Mamma, perhaps it had better have no sleeves, because, as Bibsey has no arms, she mightn't like it.'"<sup>2</sup>

Among Ruskin's visitors to Brantwood in 1873 were Lord and Lady Mount-Temple. Mrs. Severn recalls a characteristic incident of the visit. They went for an excursion to Monk Coniston Tarn to admire the famous view, but an invidious fog descended. Ruskin waved his hand, and began to describe what they ought to be seeing. "After all," said

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 49,  
VOL. II,

<sup>2</sup> *Art of England*, § 91.  
T



CHAP. Lady Mount-Temple, laughing, "is not this the best that we  
XVI. could have?" "And to me," replied Ruskin, in his courtly fashion, "what view could be so entirely delightful?" Another honoured visitor (in 1875 and later) was Coventry Patmore, whose letters give characteristic glimpses of Ruskin as host:—

"Ruskin's ordinary manners are courteous and obliging almost to an embarrassing degree, but a little scratch or contradiction will put him out strangely. I was walking with him and Severn among the mountains near Coniston, and we stopped to admire the beauty of a wild strawberry plant, which was in fruit and flower at the same time, in a nook by a little gully. As we went on Ruskin said to me, 'I suppose, Patmore, that we are the only three men in England who would have passed that plant without eating the fruit.' I, shy of praise for such a singular sensibility, replied, 'I believe, Ruskin, that you are the only man in England who would have thought of eating it.' He was evidently hurt, and was quite silent for some time."

"Nothing can be kinder and more sedulously courteous than Ruskin; and the Severns are a delightfully pleasant, lively, and unaffected couple. My whole day, every day since I have been here, has been filled with healthy, active amusement—rowing in the morning, walking up the mountains in the afternoon; and talking, laughing, and listening to nice unlearned music in the evenings. I leave here to-morrow. . . . I daresay I shall have a good time, though not so good as I am having here, with Ruskin almost all to myself."

Conversation between Ruskin and Patmore—Ruskin ever courteous and deferential, yet paradoxical and not always to be gainsayed, Patmore imperious and disdainful (as Mr. Sargent has depicted him)—must have been anything but dull. On one occasion, writes Patmore, "I praised a little book of old Catholic devotion, called *The Spiritual Combat*, which I saw among his books. 'Oh, do you think so much of it? Now, it seems to me to be drivel: how do you account for that?' said he. I replied, 'I suppose that you have not had the particular experience which explains it.'

This manifestly annoyed him.”<sup>1</sup> Which in its turn, as I think we may see, did not wholly displease the recorder. CHAP.  
XVI.

In 1876 Leslie Stephen and his sister-in-law, Lady Ritchie (Miss Thackeray), were staying at a neighbouring farm-house, and Ruskin saw a good deal of them. He liked Stephen, in spite of differences of opinion and temperament, and mentions talk with him as one of the agreeable things at Brantwood; but Stephen on his side “could not be at ease with Ruskin.”<sup>2</sup> Between Lady Ritchie and Ruskin there was fuller sympathy, as is seen in her description of their meeting:—

“Mrs. Severn sat in her place behind a silver urn, while the master of the house, with his back to the window, was dispensing such cheer, spiritual and temporal, as those who have been his guests will best realise,—fine wheaten bread and Scotch cakes in many a crisp circlet and crescent, and trout from the lake, and strawberries such as grow only on the Brantwood slopes. Were these cups of tea only, or cups of fancy, feeling, inspiration? And as we crunched and quaffed we listened to a certain strain not easily to be described, changing from its graver first notes to the sweetest and most charming of vibrations. . . . The text was that strawberries should be ripe and sweet, and we munched and marked it then and there; that there should be a standard of fitness applied to every detail of life, and this standard, with a certain gracious malice, wit, hospitality, and remorselessness, he began to apply to one thing and another, to one person and another, to dress, to food, to books. . . . Listening back to the echoes of a lifetime we can most of us still hear some strains very clear, very real and distinct, out of all the confusion of past noise and chatter; and the writer (nor is she alone in this) must ever count the music of Brantwood oratory among such strains. Music, oratory—I know not what to call that wondrous gift which subjugates all who come within its reach.

‘God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out.’

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<sup>1</sup> *Coventry Patmore*, by Basil Champneys, vol. i. pp. 284, 285. *Stephen*, by F. W. Maitland, pp. 292, 302, 308; and see Lib. Ed.,

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Letters of Leslie* vol. xxviii. p. 211.

CHAP. XVI. If ever a man lent out his mind to help others, Ruskin is the man. From country to country, from age to age, from element to element, he leads the way; while his audience, laughing, delighted, follows with scrambling thoughts and apprehensions and flying leaps, he meanwhile illustrating each delightful, faneiful, dictatorial sentence with pictures by the way—things, facts, objects interwoven, book-cases opening wide, sliding drawers unlocked with his own marvellous keys—and lo! . . . we are perhaps down in the centre of the earth, far below Brantwood and its surrounding hills, among specimens, minerals, and precious stones, Ruskin still going ahead, and crying ‘Sesame’ and ‘Sesame,’ and revealing each secret recess of his king’s treasury in turn, pointing to each tiny point of light and rainbow veiled in marble, gold and opal, crystal and emerald. Then, again, while we are wondering, and barely beginning to apprehend his delightful illustrations, the lecturer changes from natural things to those of art, from veins of gold meandering in the marble, and, speaking of past ages, to coins marking the history of man. I was specially struck by some lovely old Holbein pieces of Henry VIII. which he brought out. I can still see Ruskin’s hand holding the broad gold mark in its palm.”<sup>1</sup>

No other pen, I think, has caught so well the notes of Ruskin’s manner. Its charm, *abandon*, copiousness were the spontaneous expression of a nature richly endowed, yet they were fed also by constant thoughts of duty and reverence. Lady Ritchie’s picture of Ruskin at his tea-table may be supplemented by a note from his diary: “As I was eating my last bit of bread, looking at the sky and thinking, what I have often thought before, that *all* bread should be eaten ‘in remembrance of Me,’ and so, whether we eat or drink, all should be done to the glory of God,—it came to me that if we do not *this*, we *must*, in all we eat or drink, do all to the glory of the devil.”<sup>2</sup> And as one reads of

<sup>1</sup> From *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning*, pp. 66–76. Another account of an evening at Brantwood, at about the same date—by the late Professor Gurney of Harvard University—is

printed at vol. ii. pp. 134–135 of the *Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*.

<sup>2</sup> Entry at Venice, December 28, 1876. Compare *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 74.

Ruskin's cheerful talk and happy ways, one must not forget the understrain of effort, trial, and self-searching, which colours almost every page of his private communings at this time. "My own mind," he writes on one page, "is in a quite discomfited and disgraced state . . . except only in taking shame to itself for all failure, and resigning itself to what of distress it has to bear and to what pleasure it can take, my clear duty being now to be as happy as I can; so redeeming what I can of the past which has been so lost or miserable, happy for the sake of others always, without wanting, for pride's sake, that they should know how hard it costs to be happy. Not but that I've more capacity in that kind still than thousands, or than I ever hoped to have, lately."<sup>1</sup> Such is the law of compensation; the acutest sensibility means capacity, alike for pain and for pleasure, which is not shared by minds cast in a commoner mould.

<sup>1</sup> Entry at Venice, May 3, 1877.



## CHAPTER XVII

### VENICE REVISITED

(1876-1877)

"Time was, every hour in Venice was joy to me. Now, I work as I should on a portrait of my mother, dead."—RUSKIN (from a letter to Professor Norton, Jan. 16, 1877.)

THE year following the death of Miss La Touche was to Ruskin one of great depression, which neither his driving tours (Chap. XV.) nor the society of congenial friends (Chap. XVI.) sufficed to conquer. His diary becomes increasingly full of hypochondriacal entries, and he notes, as a symptom new to him, a "quite terrible languor" (May 10, 1876). The stress of incessant work, done under the strain of emotional excitement, was already beginning to tell. His medical attendant, Dr. Parsons of Hawkshead, to whose skill and sympathy Ruskin owed much, told him that he needed nothing but rest. In the spring of 1876 he had been re-elected Professor at Oxford, but he felt unable to lecture, and, obtaining leave of absence for a year, determined to seek a stimulus in complete change of scene. His mind was half set on revisiting Venice, when he received counsel which decided him. Prince Leopold, early in 1876, had been in Venice, where he saw much of Ruskin's friend, Rawdon Brown. The Prince told Brown to persuade Ruskin to come and prepare a new edition of the *Stones of Venice*. Ruskin accepted the suggestion as a command, and set out in August for a long sojourn in Venice. Before leaving for Italy he went for a few days to Wales, in order to see the tenants on the first bit of ground possessed by the St. George's Guild.<sup>1</sup> He then went abroad, landing at Boulogne on August 24, and did not return to England till the middle of June 1877.

<sup>1</sup> See *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 69; and below, p. 340.

## I

He journeyed on this occasion without friends, and wrote and worked as he went. He reached Venice on September 7, and stayed in rooms at the Ca' Ferro (the Grand Hotel) till February, when he moved to the Calcina, on the Zattere, opposite the Giudecca. This little café, with its connected lodgings and vine-clad restaurant, well known to many literary and artistic visitors to Venice, has now been rebuilt, and Ruskin's sojourn in the old house is recorded by a memorial tablet upon the new one. His own impressions of the place were duly recorded in a letter to Mrs. Severn:—

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"VENICE, 13th Feb. '77. . . . I couldn't write yesterday, for I was changing lodgings. The Grand Hotel was really *too* expensive. I was getting quite ruined, so I came away to a little inn fronting the *Giudecca*, and commanding sunrise and sunset both, where I have two rooms for six francs a day, instead of one for twelve. Also, which I find a great advantage, I look along the water instead of down on it, and get perfectly picturesque views of boats instead of masthead ones, and I think I shall be comfy. St. Ursula *is* nearly done at last I think, then I begin a gold and purple arch of St. Mark's, for spring work. You'll have such an explosion of fireworks<sup>1</sup> (poor dear old Harrison, were he but here to see!) next month if I keep well—Venetian history and pictures!"

The eight months which Ruskin spent in Venice were a busy and a productive time. The study of Carpaccio, which is a leading topic in his Venetian writings of this period, meant a great deal more than any process of mere literary work. As with Tintoret and Turner and Luini and Botticelli, so with Carpaccio, Ruskin's descriptions were based on long and laborious studies with the brush. He spent many weeks in making studies of St. Ursula's Dream, and was greatly pleased with the facilities which the authorities gave him,

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<sup>1</sup> That is, in *Fors Clavigera*. friend and mentor, had died in W. H. Harrison, Ruskin's old 1874.

CHAP. for at that time the picture was hung high above the line.  
XVII. In his letters he reported progress:—

(To MRS. SEVERN.) “*September 16.*—I’m in a great state of effervescence to-day, for they’re—what do you think—going to take my dear little princess down for me, and give her to me all to myself where I can look at her all day long. It really happens very Fors-y that the very person whom I found facing the frescoes by Cimabue at Assisi should be now inspector of the Academy at Venice, and that the Historical Society of Venice had just made me a member last month, so I can get anything done that I want almost. And I find so much more beauty than I used to, because I had never time to look for it rightly, doing the technical work of the *Stones*, but now I see such beautiful things everywhere, and I’m doing pretty things; but, oh dear, they take such a time to do well, and the houses have got so many windows in them!”

(To MISS SUSAN BEEVER.) “*18th September.*—I never knew such a fight as the good and wicked fairies are having over my poor body and spirit just now. The good fairies have got down the St. Ursula for me and given her to me all to myself, and sent me fine weather and nice gondoliers, and a good cook, and a pleasant waiter; and the bad fairies keep putting everything upside down, and putting black in my box when I want white, and making me forget all I want, and find all I don’t, and making the hinges come off my boards, and the leaves out of my books, and driving me as wild as wild can be; but I’m getting something done in spite of them, only I never *can* get my letters written.”

(To MRS. SEVERN.) “*September 19.*—Fancy having St. Ursula right down on the floor in a good light and leave to lock myself in with her. . . . There she lies, so real, that when the room’s quite quiet, I get afraid of waking her! . . . Then there’s the one of St. Ursula asleep—that other way—which was up so high I never found it out till this time. It has been terribly injured, and wants securing to the canvas, and the Academy, like our own [National Gallery], can’t get money from the Government. So I’ve offered to bear all the expense of its repairing, on condition it is brought down where people can see it; and I think they’ll do it!—at all events they’re grateful for the offer.”

(To MRS. SEVERN.) “*October 24.*—I have not the least idea

at present when I shall get home, for I am determined I *will* not leave this St. Mark's School drawing unfinished—if time or patience will do it. I am painting it against Canaletto, and it is of real importance to all my past writings.”

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Public affairs were not forgotten in the press of artistic studies, as may be seen from *Fors Clavigera* and the following note to Burne-Jones, which refers to the preparations for the “National Conference” on the Eastern Question, held at the St. James's Hall on December 8. William Morris and Burne-Jones were both keenly interested on Gladstone's side in opposition to Disraeli's policy, and Ruskin had sent his name to be placed on the list of Conveners of the Conference:—

“VENICE, 8th Dec. '76.—All your letter is very precious to me. I am greatly amazed, for one thing, to find that I can be of use and value to you in this matter—supposing myself a mere outlaw in public opinion. I hope neither Morris nor you will retire wholly again out of such spheres of effort. It seems to me especially a time when the quietest men should be disquieted, and the meekest, self-assertive. . . . I have scarcely begun my work yet on the old Stones, having been entirely taken up with St. Ursulas.”

Two of Ruskin's studies of St. Ursula are in the Oxford Collection. The most elaborate of his drawings of St. Mark's is at Brantwood; the study of the Scuola di San Marco and other drawings of the time were all works of some elaboration; but during these months, and especially in the winter, he made also a large number of rapid pencil sketches. Several of these have passed into public collections. In order that he might study architectural details the more closely, he procured casts of some of his favourite capitals; these he described in *Fors Clavigera*, and one of the casts he sent home to his Museum at Sheffield.

The literary part of Ruskin's work, devoted to studies in Venetian history, led him into many interesting byways. He had a group of friends in Venice who were equally competent and willing to help him. There was Edward



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Cheney, the connoisseur and collector, who had met Ruskin in Venice a quarter of a century before,<sup>1</sup> and now, in ripe old age, was still as cheery, and as caustic, as ever. "Mr. Cheney's sayings," says Ruskin to Rawdon Brown, "are very sweet and kind. Who would ever think there was such a salt satire in the make of him! What a lazy boy he is; why doesn't he write a history of Venice?" The correspondence between Ruskin and Rawdon Brown, now in the possession of the British Museum, shows how much Ruskin valued his friend's assistance on all points of history. They met very often, and on other days notes, and books, and manuscripts passed between "Papa" Brown and his "loving figlio, J. Ruskin." None of Ruskin's historical researches pleased him so much as his discovery of an early inscription on the Church of S. Giacomo di Rialto. "There are none of the rewarding accidents of my life's work," he wrote, "in which I take so much pride." The inscription being translated is this, and Ruskin attached it, in a note, to a new edition of *Unto this Last*:—

"Around this temple let the merchant's law be just, his weights true, and his contracts guileless."

During this winter at Venice Ruskin was the centre of a large circle of friends and pupils. He especially enjoyed making the acquaintance, through an introduction from Professor Norton, of Professor C. H. Moore of Harvard University. Mr. Moore was his companion on many an expedition in the lagoons; and in Venice itself they sketched and studied in the Academy together. He met also an Oxford pupil, Mr. J. Reddie Anderson, whom he set to work on Carpaccio. It was at this time, too, that he made acquaintance with two young Venetian artists, to whom he became warmly attached. One of them, Signor Angelo Alessandri, we shall meet again in a later chapter (XX.). The other was Giacomo Boni; his letters to Ruskin, which are preserved at Brantwood, show how much the young architect owed to the books, sympathy, and help of the English writer. He entered a new life, he says, on first reading the books; his principles

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 264.

of architecture, were to be founded on Ruskin's teaching, and he prepared lectures about Ruskin. The devoted enthusiasm of this architect, who interpreted "restoration" as preservation, not destruction, was very pleasing to Ruskin. I do not know whether the studies in archæological research and excavation, by which Commendatore Boni is now so well known, owed anything to him; but certainly Ruskin urged him to classical studies, and sent him various books useful in such studies. "I must omit all formalities," wrote Ruskin to him, "and embrace you as a most dear friend, and hold myself deeply honoured so—for the spirit of your great Fathers and your lovely Land is on you;—surely such drawing I have never seen by living hand—never, by any hand, since the days of Lippi and Mantegna. It has given me new life and hope to see it, and to read what you have so sweetly and passionately written. Heaven keep you in health and heart." Another young artist working for Ruskin at Venice was Signor Raffaele Carloforti of Assisi. He was acquainted with Count Zorzi, and had spoken to Ruskin of the Count's desire to publish a pamphlet of protest against the restoration of St. Mark's. Ruskin bade Carloforti to introduce his friend, who thus describes their first meeting:—

"When at eight o'clock that evening I entered his study and drawing-room, Ruskin, upright and serious, was seated at a large writing-table, covered with books, manuscripts, and writing paper, and in his hand he held an immense cork pen-holder as thick as a Havana cigar: he gave me one like it some time later. He wore a dark-blue frock-coat, a high cravat, and a higher collar. His ruddy face, his reddish hair and whiskers, and indeed his whole figure, were illuminated by a number of candles burning in silver candlesticks. It seemed to me there were seven of them: perhaps because my head was full of the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*. He rose quickly and, with his slight person full of dignity, advanced to meet me as Carloforti introduced me, and thanked me for coming, in very English Italian. Then sitting down again and signing to me to take an arm-chair near him, he continued: 'And I thank my good friend Raffaele for having fulfilled the mission with which I charged him. So—they are assassinating St. Mark's?' 'Yes,

CHAP. XVII. sir, most unfortunately. And no one can see that better than yourself. They have been at it a good while, and they are going on.' ”

The Count proceeded to read the pages which were presently published, owing to Ruskin's good offices and with a preface from him :—

“ I spoke with impetuous enthusiasm, for all my heart was in the subject. All at once Ruskin interrupted me by springing to his feet. I did the same, and found myself in his arms. ‘ For thirty years,’ he said, with emotion, kissing my forehead, ‘ I have been seeking a Venetian patrician—an artist—who would think and write about Venice and about St. Mark's as you have done, my young friend, and I am happy to have found you.’ ”

## II

Such, then, were Ruskin's occupations in Venice during this winter. He was surrounded with friends and pupils; immersed in his own work, yet interested also in theirs; sketching, copying, talking, writing. Rest—the one thing which the doctors told him he needed—was the one thing which he had no time to take. Here is his account of a typical day :—

(*To C. E. NORTON.*) “ *VENICE, 5th Oct. 1876.*—MY DEAREST CHARLES,—It always seems to me that whenever I write a careful letter, people don't get it. I'm sure one or two long ones to you have been lost. However, I have yours, to-day, and sit down to tell you how my days pass. I wake as a matter of course about half-past five, and get up and go out on my balcony in my night-gown to see if there's going to be a nice dawn. That's the view I have from it—with the pretty traceried balcony of the Contarini Fasan next door [sketch]. Generally there is a good dawn (nothing but sunshine and moonlight for the last month). At six I get up, and dress, with occasionally balcony interludes—but always get to my writing table at seven, where, by scolding and paying, I secure my punctual cup of coffee, and do a bit of the *Laws of Plato* to build the days on. I find Jowett's translation is good for nothing, and shall do one myself, as I've intended these fifteen

years. At half-past seven the gondola is waiting and takes me to the bridge before St. John and Paul, where I give an hour of my very best day's work to painting the School of Mark and vista of Canal to Murano. It's a great Canaletto view, and I'm painting it against him.

"I am rowed back to breakfast at nine, and, till half-past ten, think over and write what little I can of my new fourth vol. of *Stones of Venice*. At half-past ten I go to the Academy, where I find Moore at work; and we sit down to our picture together. . . . I strike work at two or a little after—go home, read letters, and dine at three; lie on sofa and read any vicious book I can find to amuse me—to prevent St. Ursula having it all her own way. Am greatly amused with the life of Casanova at present. At half-past four, gondola again—I am floated, half asleep, to Murano—or the Armenians—or the San Giorgio in Alga—wake up, and make some little evening sketch, by way of diary. Then take oar myself, and row into the dark or moonlight. Home at seven, well heated—quiet tea—after that, give audiences, if people want me; otherwise read Venetian history—if no imperative letters—and to bed at ten. I am very much delighted at having Mr. Moore for a companion—we have perfect sympathy in all art matters and are not in dissonance in any others. His voice continually reminds me of yours. And he's not at all so wicked nor so republican as you, and minds all I say! But for all your naughtiness, I'm always your loving."

What Ruskin here calls "my fourth vol. of *Stones of Venice*" was originally issued in separate parts, of a conveniently pocketable shape, under the title *St. Mark's Rest: The History of Venice, written for the help of the few travellers who still care for her monuments*. He plunged deep, as was his wont, into his subject, and collected more materials than he was to find time or strength to use. He rose with the dawn, and worked hard all day, except for his afternoon row on the lagoons; but "the accurately divided day," he says in his diary (October 19), "rushes round like a paddle-wheel, or rather invisibly sliding like a screw." "A thousand things in my head," he says again (December 29), "pushing each other like shoals of minnows."



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The "History of Venice" was but a fragment of what its author designed. Critics of the book have noted that "much of it seems to be addressed to children of tender age," and in quoting from one of the chapters, Ruskin himself said at Oxford that it was "meant for a lecture."<sup>1</sup> These little Italian guides were professedly written to assist young students. They irritate some readers by the occasional querulousness of their tone. "Aids to depression in the shape of certain little humorous—ill-humorous—pamphlets," Mr. Henry James called them.<sup>2</sup> The judicious, among those who do not sympathise with Ruskin's mood, know how to discriminate. "We edify ourselves," wrote George Eliot from Venice in 1880, "with what Ruskin has written in an agreeable pamphlet shape, using his knowledge gratefully, and shutting our ears to his wrathful innuendoes against the whole modern world."<sup>3</sup> And Mr. James goes on to admit that the book is "all suggestive and much of it delightfully just." The little red handbooks have been as familiar in Venice as the "Mornings" in Florence. American reprints have been particularly numerous, and recently an admirable Italian translation, illustrated and carefully edited, has been issued. Ruskin also had in hand during this winter in Venice a new edition of the *Stones*, though this was not issued till 1879–81. It consisted of Selected Chapters "Printed Separately for the Use of Travellers while staying in Venice and Verona." This "Travellers' Edition" has also been frequently reprinted and translated; it and *St. Mark's Rest* have carried Ruskin's views of Venetian art and history into wide circles.

Some of the best-known chapters of *St. Mark's Rest*, and much of the *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (1877) are devoted to the works of Carpaccio—one of the five painters whom Ruskin claimed to have discovered and interpreted.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> E. T. Cook's *Studies in Ruskin*, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> An article on "Venice" in *The Century Magazine*, Nov. 1882.

<sup>3</sup> *George Eliot's Life*, by J. W. Cross, vol. iii. p. 405.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 45.

justice of the claim cannot be denied. The first perfectly authenticated works by Carpaccio are the "St. Ursula" series (1489), now in the Venetian Academy. At various times they suffered much from barbarous treatment, and from repainting. The importance which Ruskin, an honorary member of the Venetian Academy, attached to the pictures, the fame of them which he noised abroad, and the increasing attention which visitors now paid to them, have led in recent years to great and admirable changes. Two new galleries have been built for the exhibition of the works by Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini respectively; the "St. Ursula" Series is now shown all together in one room, excellently lighted and on the level of the eye. The other pictures to which Ruskin devoted most study are the series which Carpaccio painted (1501-11) for the Confraternity of the Selavonians, and which remain in their original position in the chapel (Ruskin's "Shrine of the Slaves"). His chapter on these pictures brought them a fame greater than they had enjoyed since the time of their first production. The little chapel, so long neglected, is now included in every visitor's round, and the custode, so soon as an English or American tourist enters, conducts him to the proper point of view, and adjusts the window-blinds to give the proper light. Ruskin's remarks on other pictures by Carpaccio are often admirably just and suggestive; but his very high praise of the "Two Venetian Ladies and their Pets," in the Correr Museum at Venice, has often, and not unreasonably, been cited as an instance of the waywardness of his judgments. It is true that those who smile at Ruskin's description of the canvas as "the best picture in the world," forget the limitations which he added—namely, "putting aside higher conditions, and looking only to perfection of execution." Even so, however, the praise is overstrained; but, for the rest, Ruskin's efforts to make this charming painter better known and appreciated have met with general success. They have been the means of giving additional pleasure to visitors to Venice, and have been followed by a considerable literature devoted to Carpaccio.

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The other Venetian work into which Ruskin threw himself was that of protest against restorations at St. Mark's, some already accomplished, others at that time threatened. And here a distinction must be made. Structural repair is one thing; the "restoration" of decorative features is another. The work of restoration has been in progress at St. Mark's, according as means permitted, ever since 1840, and, in the opinion of successive architects and engineers, the Basilica would otherwise have fallen to pieces, for it was the work of men who were admirable artists but poor builders. The evidence to this effect is incontrovertible, and Ruskin, though he was unaware of the extent of the danger, did not deny its existence. He admitted the need from time to time of structural repairs;<sup>1</sup> he distinguished between the condition of the encrusting marbles, which needed no restoration, and the stability of the fabric, which might need strengthening. He predicted, only too truly, that the prime danger was to the Campanile.<sup>2</sup> What he protested against was not the work of restoration in itself, but the manner in which it was carried out. Here, as we shall see, he was happily in large measure successful.

In 1857 the work of restoring St. Mark's had been entrusted to G. B. Meduna, who was clerk of the works to the churchwardens. His first undertaking was the rebuilding of the north side of the church towards the Piazzetta dei Leoncini. He took down the whole of the marble facing, laid new foundations with relieving arches under the bases of the pilasters, and rebuilt the internal masses of the walls. So far, the work of restoration may well have been necessary, and no fault need be found. It is otherwise with Meduna's subsequent proceedings. The columns were all scraped with pumice-stone, and "a facing of unpicturesque smooth-veined Tino marble was substituted for the precious ancient one,"<sup>3</sup> which was arranged in

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Count Zorzi, § 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorial Studies of St. Mark's*, § 9.

<sup>3</sup> *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice, illustrated from the points of*

*view of Art and History by Venetian writers under the direction of Professor Camillo Boito. Translated by William Scott and F. H. Rosenberg: Venice, Ongania, 1888-1889.*



symmetrical patterns and richly coloured by time. These original marbles were all thrown away. This work was finished in 1864, and at the time it was loudly applauded. Meduna had given Venice something spick and span, and she rejoiced in the gift. Thus encouraged, Meduna next took in hand a similar reconstruction of the south side, including the pavilion, or portico, at the south-west angle. This work, says the Venetian writer whose authority I am here following, was carried out with even worse taste than that which characterised the earlier; and the old marbles, "inestimable for their historical value, rarity, and colour," were again dispersed or destroyed. Ruskin, as he tells Count Zorzi, had bought some of these discarded marbles, and he exhibited them at one of his lectures.<sup>1</sup> This restoration on the south side of the cathedral, commenced in 1865, was closed in 1877. Meanwhile in 1870 another "restoration," which Ruskin deplored hardly less, had been carried out. This was the levelling of the pavement of the left aisle of the church, the removal of the old tesserae, and the substitution of new ones by Messrs. Salviati. In 1877, as in 1864, the brand-new front which had been put upon the southern side of the old Basilica was warmly applauded, and Meduna next proposed to treat the great western façade in the same way. This was the state of things in which Count Zorzi intervened with his pamphlet of *Observations on the Internal and External Restorations of the Basilica of St. Mark*. To this pamphlet Ruskin contributed the prefatory letter, already mentioned. It was translated into Italian, and its eloquent and powerful arguments were so addressed as to make strong appeal to Venetian readers. Ruskin was on friendly terms with most of the local antiquaries, and with many of the influential citizens. He alluded to himself as "a foster-child of Venice"; he depicted once more in glowing terms the splendour of her monuments; he applauded the patriotic spirit of Count Zorzi, a Venetian noble worthy of "the lords of ancient Venice"; and, in what he condemned, he blamed rather the mistaken spirit of the time than

<sup>1</sup> See *Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. vii. § 40.



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the Venetians, who had still "the genius, the conscience, the ingenuity of their race." He reinforced the Count's plea for the careful preservation of the old marbles. The protest of Count Zorzi and his English friend was not to be unavailing; but at the time Ruskin was in sore distress and displeasure. Nothing was left for him to do, of practical effort, he felt, except to collect such records as might be possible of a building now, as it seemed, doomed to destruction. Meanwhile William Morris and Burne-Jones were busy in organising a protest in England. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings had recently been founded, and Morris, on its behalf, wrote letters to the papers and arranged for public meetings. A Memorial was drawn up for presentation to the Italian Government. Gladstone signed it (at Burne-Jones's instance<sup>1</sup>), and so also did Lord Beaconsfield. Ruskin's contribution to the English movement was the publication of a *Circular respecting Memorial Studies of St. Mark's*. In it, he described yet again the wonder and the beauty of the building, which indeed, he said, was not so much a piece of architecture, as "a jewelled casket and painted reliquary." He wished all success to the protest, which, as we have seen, he had anticipated in Venice itself, and asked for assistance towards completing his Memorial Studies. He exhibited also in the rooms of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours a series of photographs, showing the past and present state of the building.

He wrote in much wrath and despair. Yet already his efforts had been successful. Some say that the protests in England availed; "the roaring of the British Lion," it was suggested, "had saved the Lion of St. Mark."<sup>2</sup> The Venetian writers say that Count Zorzi's pamphlet was the important thing, and certainly Ruskin's appeal therein was more adroit than some of the utterances in England. However this may be, already before the Memorial was presented, the Italian authorities had taken decisive action.

<sup>1</sup> See *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii. pp. 95-96.

<sup>2</sup> See the Third Annual Meet-

ing and Report of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (June 28, 1880).

Threatened works were arrested, and the standing Commission for the Preservation of Monuments appointed a Committee to consider the whole question. This Committee reported in March 1880. Its Report, which was afterwards adopted in a Government Minute, was a complete vindication of Count Zorzi and Ruskin. It laid down in the strongest terms that henceforth the principle of preservation was to prevail over that of reconstruction, and that any structural repairs were to be executed "with the most scrupulous regard for the preservation of the monument in every particular." A Committee of Superintendence was appointed, and it was ordered that Meduna's substituted marbles should as far as possible be replaced by others more nearly resembling those of the ancient fabric. In the further restoration of the south front and south-west portico, which was completed in 1886, these principles were observed, and the west front itself was saved. The old mosaics in the Zeno Chapel were, as Count Zorzi urged, restored to their places. At the present time very extensive works are in progress, as a result of the thorough examination of the fabric which followed the fall of the Campanile; but the principles for which Ruskin and Count Zorzi pleaded are, as far as possible, being respected. To Ruskin, then, is due not only the better appreciation of St. Mark's, but also in large measure its preservation. Much restoration that has since been found necessary would, no doubt, have grieved him; but all such work has since 1877 been carried out with better regard for the past, and often with faithful and loving reverence.

Ruskin had other literary designs in hand during his stay in Venice. One was a "Complete Guide to the Works of Carpaccio," and another, a Treatise on Venetian Colouring, which was to be a sequel to *The Laws of Fésolé*. A few notes intended for these works are included in the Library Edition. Those who are not acquainted at first hand with the body of Ruskin's writings upon art suppose him to have been insensitive to, and indifferent of, the purely pictorial side of pictures. His notes on a picture by Carpaccio as, in Mr. Whistler's language, "a

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 XVII. But the book on the principles of Venetian colour advanced only a little way beyond a title-page; with a motto from Tintoret: *The Laws of Rivo Alto*: "Sempre si fa il mare maggiore"—a motto typical of Ruskin's designs, ever larger than his accomplishment. His activity was unceasing, and he traversed league after league, but ever there remained, beyond, the greater sea.

### III

The hours which Ruskin spent on the sea itself were very pleasant to him. Like other good Venetians, he loved alike the lagoons and the men who had their business on them. Among his gondolier-friends was one who came and "talked Dante" with him. His excursions took him often to the Armenian Convent for what he considered "the best of all views of Venice"; often, too, to the island of Sant' Elena, now desecrated, but in Ruskin's time still bright with its wilderness of flowers and shrubs, and monastery cloisters enclosing a garden of roses. There would Ruskin often go in autumn or spring evenings, to watch the "last gleam of sunshine, miraculous in gradated beauty, on the cloister and the red brick wall within it"; there, or to S. Giorgio in Alga, to wait till the sunset "ended in a blaze of amber, passing up into radiant jasper-colour cirri inlaid in the blue," with "dark masts of ships against S. Giorgio Maggiore in the west."

And why could he not, or would he not, concentrate himself upon his history of Venice—why not set himself to draw the beautiful things around him and describe them in peace? A poignant piece in *Fors Clavigera*, in one of its Letters written from Venice at the time, gives the answer:—

"Here is a little grey cockle-shell, lying beside me, which I gathered, the other evening, out of the dust of the Island of St. Helena; and a brightly-spotted snail-shell, from the thistly sands of Lido; and I want to set myself to draw these, and describe them, in peace. 'Yes,' all my friends say, 'that is my business;

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<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, vol. xxiv. p. 453.

why can't I mind it, and be happy ? ' Well, good friends, I would fain please you, and myself with you ; and live here in my Venetian palace, luxurious ; scrutinant of dome, cloud, and cockle-shell. I could even sell my books for not inconsiderable sums of money if I chose to bribe the reviewers, pay half of all I got to the book-sellers, stick bills on the lamp-posts, and say nothing but what would please the Bishop of Peterborough.<sup>1</sup> I could say a great deal that would please him, and yet be very good and useful. And little enough mind have I for any work, in this seventy-seventh year that's coming of our glorious century, wider than I could find in the compass of my cockle-shell. But alas ! my prudent friends, little enough of all that I have a mind to may be permitted me. For this green tide that eddies by my threshold is full of floating corpses, and I must leave my dinner to bury them, since I cannot save ; and put my cockle-shell in cap, and take my staff in hand, to seek an unencumbered shore. This green sea-tide !—yes, and if you knew it, your black and sulphurous tides also—Yarrow, and Teviot, and Clyde, and the stream, for ever now drumly and dark as it rolls on its way, at the ford of Melrose. Yes, and the fair lakes and running waters in your English park pleasure-grounds,—nay, also the great and wide sea, that gnaws your cliffs,—yes, and Death, and Hell also, more cruel than cliff or sea ; and a more neutral episcopal person than even my Lord of Peterborough stands, level-barred balance in hand,—waiting (how long ?) till the Sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and Death, and Hell, give up the dead which are in them." (Letter 72.)

Ruskin had, as he says elsewhere, "the accurate sense of comparative magnitudes," and this is "not a trigonometric, but a tragic power," meaning for him that he "could not be consoled by a bit of Venetian glass for the destruction of Venice, nor for the destitution of a London suburb by the softness of his own arm-chair."<sup>2</sup> This is the secret of Ruskin's divided aims ; this, the guiding clue to his life. And how persistent was the trait in his character ! Nearly forty years have passed in the story of his life since we

<sup>1</sup> Who had been reported as advising "strict neutrality" on questions of Political Economy.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to the rearranged edition of *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. (1883).



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heard him, as a youth, pausing at the outset of his career, before any of his books had been written, upon the question, "Is it a time to be counting stars or crystallising dewdrops, while the earth is falling under our feet?"<sup>1</sup> And now, when he had developed his powers in the study of art and beauty to their full extent, when he was conscious of singular gifts, when he was placed in a teacher's chair, he is brought to pause again by the same antinomy in the world around him. The beauty and its misery! Each had its summons, and to each call he felt that he had it in him to contribute somewhat of useful answer. And meanwhile the years were passing quickly by. Few only could yet remain to him. "Oh me," he wrote in his Venetian diary (Sept. 9), "if I could conquer the Shadow of Death which hurries me at work and saddens me at rest!"

#### IV

There came to Ruskin, however, shadows of another kind, and to these he attributed such quiet energy and stimulating thoughts as he was able to throw into his work at Venice. One of the Venetian numbers of *Fors* (Letter 74) begins abruptly with the statement, "Last night, St. Ursula sent me her dianthus 'out of her bedroom window, with her love,'" and presently he adds, "(with a little personal message besides, of great importance to *me* . . .) by the hands of an Irish friend now staying here." Several pages of his diary are given to the incident here referred to, and to the mystical and symbolical significance which he found in it. The friend was Lady Castletown, who, with "Irish fortune, kindness, and wit," had sent to Ruskin's rooms a pot of dianthus, "the flower of God," precisely such as Carpaccio has painted on the window-sill of St. Ursula's bedroom. His daily study at Venice was in Plato; every morning he read and translated some lines. "Must do my Plato," he notes on a day of depression; "I'm never well without that." To this disciple of Plato the divine spirit was a moving and a living reality. The spiritual power of love, intermediate between the divine and the mortal, was

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 122.

to him, as to Socrates, "the power which interprets and conveys to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and rewards of the gods; and this power spans the chasm which divides them, and in this all is bound together."<sup>1</sup> Thus did the gift "from St. Ursula" come to Ruskin with messages from his lady in heaven. The links with the unseen world which Ruskin made, or which were revealed to him, fortified him, and consoled.<sup>2</sup>

As the spring began to pass into early summer, Ruskin turned homewards, with his Venetian work if not fully done yet well started, and spent a month among the lakes and mountains, resuming there the botanical and geological studies which were always in his mind. Mr. Allen and one of his sons met Ruskin at Domo d'Ossola, and they botanised together. It was at Isella—in old days so beautiful a halting-place, now the Italian entrance to the Simplon Tunnel—that he sketched "the Myrtilla Regina" (his name for the whortleberry) which was engraved in *Proserpina*. At the Simplon inn, he made an entry in his diary, very characteristic of the mood which came upon him in the midst of scenes of unusual beauty:—

"June 10th, Sunday.—Quite dazzling morning of old Alpine purity; sacredest light on soft pines, sacredest sound of birds and waters in the pure air, a turf of gentians on my window-sill, just opening to the sun. Yesterday up the valley, that ends the gorge of Gondo, to its head; the wildest, far-away piece of lovely pastoral I remember. Three or four cottages in the upper cirque of it, so desolate! and the women and girls, with their goats, all kind, and good, but so wretched! animal-like in rude endurance and thoughtless patience, and no one caring for them."

And, similarly, a few days before (June 6): "This book is full enough of complaints, and would be fuller still, if I could put in words the bitterness of sorrow that comes on me in these lovely places." Thus, with the mountain gloom and the mountain glory mingled in his thoughts, Ruskin returned to England and St. George's work.

<sup>1</sup> *Symposium*, 202.

<sup>2</sup> See *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 75 and 88.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *FORS CLAVIGERA*

(1871-1878)

“Do you read Ruskin’s *Fors Clavigera*, which he cheerily tells me gets itself reprinted in America? If you don’t, *do*, I advise you. Also his *Munera Pulveris*, Oxford-Lectures on Art, and whatever else he is now writing,—if you can manage to get them (which is difficult here, owing to the ways he has towards the bibliopolic world!). There is nothing going on among us as notable to me as those fierce lightning-bolts Ruskin is copiously and desperately pouring into the black world of Anarchy all around him. No other man in England that I meet has in him the divine rage against iniquity, falsity, and baseness that Ruskin has, and that every man ought to have.”  
—CARLYLE (Letter to Emerson, April 2, 1872).

RUSKIN returned to England from Venice in June 1877. Eight months later he was prostrated by the first of recurring attacks of brain-fever. The literary and artistic work detailed in previous chapters were connected in one way or another with his Professorship of Art at Oxford. The work to which we have now to turn was undertaken in his self-appointed rôle as Prophet—as one charged to warn his generation of its sins, to show to it, if it might be, the way of its salvation. Unpractical as he is commonly called, and as in the vulgar sense he certainly was, Ruskin was strongly possessed by the instinct and passion for practice. His desire was to do things, and to set others to doing them. Starting as a critic of painting, he had arrived at the conclusion that art, to be really fine, must be the representation of beautiful realities and be pursued in a spirit of delight. Proceeding as a critic of architecture, he had found this art to be the reflection of national character, and the secret of good Gothic to consist in the happy life of the workman. Turning next to the study of economics, he saw, in a society

ordered on the principles of unregulated competition, and in an age given over to mechanical and material ideas, the negation of conditions favourable to happy art. The final step was, to one of his ardent temperament, clear and simple. He was not content to live in a world of the imagination; he strove to realise the conditions of the good and beautiful in the actual world—to build the Tabernacle of God among men.<sup>1</sup> It was not that he wanted to be a social reformer, or that he felt himself in any way peculiarly qualified for the part. His Prophetic work was not of choice, but of necessity. It was a payment of ransom. "I simply cannot paint, nor read, nor look at minerals, nor do anything else that I like . . . because of the misery that I know of." He had to clear himself "from all sense of responsibility for this material distress," by doing what he could to point a way to the cure of it. His work in this kind was begun, he tells us, "as a byework to quiet my conscience, that I might be happy in what I supposed to be my own proper life of art-teaching."<sup>2</sup>

## I

The first payment of ransom was the writing of *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*. This wiggling<sup>3</sup> and puzzling miscellany is unique in literature; and there is no book by any great writer about which different readers have formed such conflicting judgments. The title was an initial stumbling-stone, and sometimes received curious transmutations from the publisher's customers, such as "Clara Fogio" and "Faws Cavongera." The correspondent who ordered "Fors Clavevinegar" was probably a wag. Ruskin was constantly saying what the title meant, but as each explanation presented a different shade of meaning, many of his readers remained, it is to be feared, in a state of fog. It took me

<sup>1</sup> See *Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. vii. § 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letters I, 61.

<sup>3</sup> "'Don't read me wiggling books,'" said Leslie Stephen; "he

liked to have a great deal on one subject, and to have it in regular order" (*Life and Letters*, by F. W. Maitland, p. 25).



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five pages of close analysis in another work, to which I must now be content to refer,<sup>1</sup> to disentangle and set out in logical order the intricate play of thought in Ruskin's mind around *Fors* as Force, Fortitude, and Fortune, and *Clavigera* as bearing the Club, the Key, and the Nail. Here it must suffice to say that Ruskin intended by the title (among many other meanings) to indicate his *purpose* of showing how in the lives of men Fortune appoints things irreversibly, of fastening in sure places the truths necessary to their well-being, and of nailing down, as on the barn-door, the follies of the age; and to indicate, in his *method*, "the desultory and accidental character of the work." The reader was always to remember that "*Fors* is a *letter*, written as a letter should be written, frankly, and as the mood or topic chances." The "Letters" were addressed "To the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain," but this was an address which Ruskin did not intend in the ordinary sense of the words. He wrote for all "fellow-workmen" with him, all labourers in the vineyard; including, as he explained, "masters, pastors, and princes" no less than the rank and file.<sup>2</sup>

To the critics at the time when the monthly Letters first appeared, they seemed "watery and rambling verbiage";<sup>3</sup> and this hostile point of view was put by a living poet to whom all Ruskin's later writings seemed mere "studies in reviling and abusing."<sup>4</sup> To Carlyle, on the other hand, there was "nothing going on among us as notable to me as those fierce lightning-bolts Ruskin is desperately pouring into the black world of Anarchy all around him." So he wrote to Emerson in the letter quoted at the head of this chapter; and to Ruskin himself he wrote:—

"This *Fors Clavigera* (No. 5), which I have just finished reading, is incomparable; a quasi-sacred consolation to me, which

<sup>1</sup> Library Edition, vol. xxvii. pp. xix.-xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Letters 85, 81, 25, and 89.

<sup>3</sup> *Spectator*, Oct. 7, 1871.

<sup>4</sup> "To John of Brantwood,"

in William Watson's *Wordsworth's Grave and other Poems*, p. 42, edition of 1890 (the piece was afterwards withdrawn).

almost brings tears into my eyes! Every word of it is as if spoken, not out of my poor heart only, but out of the eternal skies; words winged with Empyrean wisdom, piercing as lightning—and which I really do not remember to have heard the like of. *Continue*, while you have such utterances in you, to give them voice. They will find and force entrance into human hearts, *whatever* the ‘angle of incidence’ may be; that is to say, whether, for the degraded and *inhuman* Blockheadism we, so-called ‘men,’ have mostly now become, you come in upon them at the broadside, at the top, or even at the bottom. Euge, Euge!”<sup>1</sup>

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From a later letter of *Fors* (No. 14) Carlyle quoted, in his *Early Kings of Norway*, “one of those strange, piercing, winged words of Ruskin”; and Ruskin in his diary (April 1875) records how Carlyle “laughed with sparkling eyes” at another passage—the prayer of the monied man:—

“Oh, how hate I Thy law! it is my abomination all the day; my feet are swift in running to mischief, and I have done all the things I ought not to have done, and left undone all I ought to have done; have mercy upon me, miserable sinner,—and grant that I, worthily lamenting my sins and acknowledging my wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness,—and give me my long purse here and my eternal Paradise there, all together, for Christ’s sake, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory,” etc.<sup>1</sup>

“Yes,” said Carlyle, “Christ and the Holy Ghost are very sure to ratify that arrangement, if it is properly brought before them”! Present-day critics of Ruskin incline rather to Carlyle’s side, and some of them have accounted *Fors Clavigera* Ruskin’s masterpiece.<sup>2</sup> I understand what they mean, though, except in a qualified sense, the judgment seems to be a little wayward. If (to adopt a phrase from Mr. Harrison<sup>3</sup>) I had to plead the cause of Ruskin before the Supreme Court in the

<sup>1</sup> Letter 51.

<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the opinion of Mr. A. C. Benson in his in-

teresting book, *Ruskin: a Study in Personality* (1911).

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 16.

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Republic of Letters, I should be somewhat embarrassed in taking with me as my exhibit a book of such prodigious length, and yet so formless and with so much of merely ephemeral significance in it. I should be more comfortable with *Unto this Last*, or *Præterita*, or *The Stones of Venice*. But on the merits of the style in which *Fors Clavigera* is written, there can hardly be two opinions. Among the books in Ruskin's latest manner, it is surpassed, if at all, only by *Præterita*, and *Fors* has the advantage in showing greater range. *Præterita* is written very nearly in one sustained mood. In *Fors Clavigera* there is every mood, and for each in turn perfect self-expression is found. I have heard it suggested that *Fors* was written very easily and without any conscious art or pains. Such manuscript for it as I have seen does not bear this out, and Ruskin himself tells us that one of the Letters sometimes took him ten or twelve days to write.<sup>1</sup> But what is true is that the effect is one of perfect ease. The words flow on as if they fell straight from the lips in familiar conversation. Also in *Fors Clavigera* the "purple patches" have gone; and, though occasionally there are fine descriptive passages, Ruskin now set himself deliberately to eschew ornament. *Fors*, besides showing other characteristics presently to be noticed, is, in point of style, a masterpiece of sustained vivacity and directness. "All the diction is fused," as Mrs. Meynell says, "in the fiery life."<sup>2</sup> And whether *Fors Clavigera* be, or be not, Ruskin's masterpiece, it is assuredly a master-key among his works. If one were asked to name the book in which a reader would come soonest and most closely at the character, temperament, personality of the author, *Fors Clavigera* must be the answer. It is, says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "Ruskin's *Hamlet*, and also his *Apocalypse*." In it, more even than in any other of his books, Ruskin writes without reserve, with *abandon*, with utter self-revelation. Nowhere else are his strength and his weakness, his virtues and his faults, his resources and his limitations, so plainly stamped on the printed page.

<sup>1</sup> Letter 82, § 7.

<sup>2</sup> *John Ruskin*, p. 283.

## II

*Fors Clavigera* is in part avowedly a Book of Personal Confessions. "Besides other and weightier matters, it contains," says Ruskin in one of his many summaries of the book, "much trivial and desultory talk by the way. Scattered up and down in it—perhaps by the Devil's sowing tares among the wheat—there is much casual expression of my own personal feelings and faith, together with bits of autobiography." The formal bits of autobiography "were allowed place," he says, "not without some notion of their being useful, but yet imprudently, and even incontinently, because I could not at the moment hold my tongue about what vexed or interested me, or returned soothingly to the memory."<sup>1</sup> It was fortunate for English literature that Ruskin's childhood thus returned soothingly to his memory, while he was writing *Fors*, for out of the notes so included grew *Præterita*. Ruskin's charge against himself of imprudence and incontinence in autobiographical talk has more relevance to casual references to his own affairs at the time when he was writing. "I rather enjoy talking about myself," he says, "even in my follies."<sup>2</sup> He talked no less freely about his graces; giving testimonials to his kindness, and setting forth some (though by no means all) of his charities. There were reasons, and good ones, for such confessions in *Fors Clavigera*. He was setting himself up as a teacher and a leader; and this is the excuse which he made in an earlier book for "what taint of ungracefulness" might attach to his speaking about himself: whether people accused him of boasting or not, he thought it right to let them know that he practised what he preached.<sup>3</sup> As *Fors Clavigera* proceeded, and Ruskin was led into the position of leader in a proposed reformation and of Master of an actual organisation, he felt the call to some self-revelation to be the more instant. He was appealing to men of leisure and culture to share their gifts and spend themselves freely for their fellows. His "Companions of St. George" were to

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XVIII.<sup>1</sup> Letter 88.<sup>2</sup> Letter 75.<sup>3</sup> *Time and Tide*, § 115.



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have "glass pockets";<sup>1</sup> therefore the Master first revealed his own. But Ruskin "rather enjoyed talking about himself"—when there was no compelling reason, as well as when there was. He tells us accordingly of his flirtations and affections, of his cats and dogs, of his pets and their frocks, of his dressing-gown, his wristbands and his blue ties. His good tempers and his ill, his pleasures and pains, his dreams, his fancies, his whims, are all in turn reflected on the printed pages of *For's*. To some readers all this constitutes an added charm in the book; to others, it has proved a rock of offence. There need be no arguing in the matter. If we like the person, we shall like his book; if we are not in sympathy with him, we shall not. "I allowed myself to write on each subject," says Ruskin, "whatever came into my mind, wishing the reader, like a friend, to know exactly what my mind was; but no candour will explain this to persons who have no feelings in common with me."<sup>2</sup> Reviewers often fell foul of the Letters on the score of their egotism and vanity. Ruskin, when sitting down to pen chit-chat about himself, might have answered the objector in the words with which the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table defended the "trivial personalities," the "splashes and streaks of sentiment," which "you may see when I show you my heart's corolla as if it were a tulip":—"Pray, do not give yourself the trouble to fancy me an idiot whose conceit it is to treat himself as an exceptional being. It is because you are just like me that I talk and know you will listen. We are all splashed and streaked with sentiments—not with precisely the same tints, or in exactly the same patterns, but by the same hand and from the same palette." That there was an element of vanity in Ruskin he was too keen a critic of himself to deny;<sup>3</sup> but with regard to this, I am of the opinion expressed by an eminently sane critic with regard to one of Ruskin's favourite authors. "His vanity," says Mr. Birrell, of Richardson, "afforded nobody anything but pleasure. The vanity of a distinguished man, if at the same time he happens to be a good man, is a quality so

<sup>1</sup> Letter 8.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 85.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ariadne Florentina*, § 2.

agreeable in its manifestations that to look for it and not to find it would be to miss a pleasure."<sup>1</sup> Nobody can read *Fors Clavigera* without perceiving that Ruskin was a man of many weaknesses and failings; but neither can anybody read it without perceiving that he was a good man.

## III

The book is one of self-revelation in whatever aspect it be regarded. For instance: what a mirror of the author's mind it is in its discursiveness! It ranges from Monmouth to Macedon, from China to Peru, from Giotto to goose-pie. No one chaffed the book in this matter more piquantly than Ruskin himself. His "eddies of thought" turned him, he confesses, "into apparently irrelevant, and certainly unprogressive inlets"; and in discussing the course of true love in the *Waverley Novels*, he had to exercise some self-restraint in not proceeding to show the connexion of this topic with "railways, joint-stock banks, the landed interest, the parliamentary interest, grouse shooting, lawn tennis, monthly magazines, spring fashions, and Christmas cards." He often knows not where to begin, by reason of "the thousand things flitting in my mind, like sea-birds for which there are no sands to settle upon."<sup>2</sup> Nothing settles itself down in *Fors Clavigera* for long at a time, and in this respect the book is intensely characteristic of the dispersal of his interests and studies which has been fully illustrated in previous chapters. The book "wiggles" in every Letter, almost on every page. There is compensation in the charm of the unexpected; so quaint are the transitions, so ingenious the connexion of ideas. Ruskin claims that his miscellaneous topics are introduced though in "abrupt haste," yet in "true sequence"; that the book is "a mosaic-work," in which the pieces are "set, indeed, in patches, but not without design."<sup>3</sup> But it is a very long book, and sometimes the allusions and transitions are hard to follow. The author is constantly picking up, at a later stage, allusions, persons, incidents which he first

<sup>1</sup> *Res Judicata*, p. 33.<sup>2</sup> Letters 91 and 60.<sup>3</sup> Letters 75, 36.

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introduced earlier in the journey. Except to a reader who tackles the book consecutively and is blessed with a very retentive memory, *Fors Clavigera* must remain somewhat puzzling without abundant cross-references. One of Ruskin's literary tricks is worth noting in this connexion. Carlyle was a humourist in types; he invents his Teufelsdröckh, his Bobus of Houndsditch, his Smelfungus. Ruskin, like Matthew Arnold, seizes upon particular individuals, actual incidents, chance phrases, drops them and takes them up again, plays with them, worries them, turns them inside out, and introduces them in many an out-of-the-way connexion. It may be doubted whether many readers of *Fors Clavigera* would recognise at sight, meeting them on chance pages, the gospel of the Ho's, Mr. Lyttel, Mr. Tipple, Mr. M'Cosh, the Ninety-two Newspapers, and the permutations in Chillianwallah.

## IV

In its main and essential purposes, *Fors Clavigera* may be described as (a) a criticism of the later decades of the nineteenth century, and (b) as an essay in social reconstruction. A careful reader will find that all the apparently irrelevant topics of the book are referable, in one connexion or another, to one or the other of these purposes. These two aspects of the book are in Ruskin's treatment closely blended; one can hardly say anywhere of this Letter that it deals with the one subject, or of that Letter that it deals with the other; but the two aspects may conveniently be treated in separate order, the essay in social reconstruction being reserved for the next chapter. The criticism of the nineteenth century which runs through the book from its first page to the last is deeply coloured by the influence of Carlyle. Ruskin in one Letter speaks of his work in *Fors Clavigera* as being done "with only one man in England—Thomas Carlyle—to whom I can look for steady guidance."<sup>1</sup> The opening passage of the book, in which, "looking down

<sup>1</sup> Letter 37. So, in his *Report* as "following Carlyle's grander exhortation in *Past and Present*." of January 1886 on the St. George's Guild, Ruskin speaks of his scheme

from Ingleborough," Ruskin describes England as sunk in "misery and beggary," recalls—and, I doubt not, was meant to recall—the words with which Carlyle, thirty years before, opened his *Past and Present*:—

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"The condition of England is justly regarded as one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest ever seen in this world. England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition."

*Fors Clavigera* may be described, under one aspect of it, as a resumption, at the latter part of the century, of the contrast between *Past and Present* which Carlyle had drawn three decades before. The background, against which Ruskin set his criticism, is the scheme of social economy, already expounded in his earlier books, and especially in *Unto this Last* and *Munera Pulveris*. He proceeds, however, not from generals to particulars, but from particulars to generals. The form of Letters into which he cast the book permitted him to deal with passing events, drawing or suggesting their moral, instead of dealing with abstract principles. He notes any incident, policy, or opinion of the day, as he found it in the papers or encountered it in his own experience, and relates it to some of his doctrines, or contrasts it with some past event or some better opinion. In one place he states, greatly daring, that he "never reads newspapers."<sup>1</sup> He picked and chose, no doubt; and one can believe that he never read the whole of a Parliamentary Debate. But he was a persistent reader of the newspapers; he sometimes ruled off parallel columns to point a contrast; and he collected a great number of cuttings from them.<sup>2</sup> He sees one morning the completion of the British Indian Submarine cable hailed as a triumph of progress; but what, he wants to know, are the messages it conveys? He finds his morning newspaper dilating upon railroad enterprise; but is it any real advantage, he asks, that "every fool in Buxton can be at Bakewell in half-an-hour, and every fool in Bakewell at Buxton?" He is especially fond of taking hold of some evidence of unexampled prosperity,

<sup>1</sup> Letter 89.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. pp. 273, 356.



CHAP. as it is estimated by Chancellors of the Exchequer, and  
XVIII. contrasting it with pictures of domestic life as they are drawn in the courts of police-magistrates and coroners. So, again, he will take some incident of travel which gives him a good instance of vacuity or vulgarity, and contrast it with times of fuller life or persons of better sensibility. Or, once more, he fastens on some act or word of impiety to the good and beautiful, and compares it with some gracious act or fine thought in the past. "I hold myself, and this book of mine," says Ruskin, "for nothing better than Morning, Noon, and Evening Advertisers of what things appear verily noteworthy in the midst of us."<sup>1</sup> Noteworthy occasionally for praise—as, for instance, a speech at the Manchester Chamber of Commerce on "the immorality of cheapness" and Samuel Plimsoll's protest against over-laden ships—but more often for blame. He takes hold of the speeches of prominent politicians—of Mr. Lowe's on the paltriness of the battle of Marathon, or of Mr. Bright in partial defence of adulteration, and finds texts in them for attacks on the vulgarity, narrowness, or selfishness of a materialistic and money-grubbing age. Or, again, he fastens upon circulars, prospectuses, and newspaper articles, and exposes them as types of the stupidities of the age, for "it seems to be the appointed function of the nineteenth century to exhibit in all things the elect pattern of perfect Folly." Thus a statement, in some circular or other, that over-production is the cause of distress is nailed down as "the negative acme of mortal stupidity."

## V

In all this kind, *Fors Clavigera* is intensely characteristic of its author. The "divine rage against iniquity," which Carlyle praised, burns in every Letter; and perhaps of a Prophet no more can be expected. But who can fail to be struck also, as he turns the pages of that book, by the petulance, the arrogance, the want of proportion that so often mark its outbursts? Sir Antony is not more absolute; Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Letter 61.

Podsnap, not more peremptory. But there are some reservations, or at any rate some explanations, which should be made. *Fors* was, as we have seen, a work by the way; a payment of ransom in order to win, if it might be, peace of mind for other things. He appointed himself, as it were, his own Special Commissioner, charged to go and come back—bringing the millennium with him. And when it did not come—when so many of the actual conditions were unfavourable to it—terrible was the vexation of his soul. He wrote hotly, on the spur of the moment, under the immediate influence of external circumstances. “Never was a soul,” says his friend, Professor Norton, “more open and accessible to immediate impressions, never one that responded with more sensitiveness or more instant sympathy to the appeals of nature or of man. It was like an Æolian harp, its strings quivering musically in serene days under the touch of the soft air; but, as the clouds gathered and the winds rose, vibrating in the blast with a tension that might break the sounding-board itself.” Never was a soul more accessible to immediate impressions—and hence never was there a writer whose words at any given place more require to be studied in relation to his point of view at the moment: “While I am looking at a sunset,” he once said, “I forget the sunrise; but the next morning sunrise makes me forget the sunset.”<sup>1</sup> In *Fors Clavigera*, written with the frankness of a diary or a familiar letter, every passing mood leaves its impress on the printed page, and Ruskin’s extreme, and even morbid, sensitiveness colours the book throughout. “I cannot say,” wrote Cardinal Manning to Ruskin (Oct. 21, 1873), “with what interest I have read *Fors Clavigera*. It is like the beating of one’s heart in a nightmare.” “One seems almost,” says Leslie Stephen, “to be listening to the cries of a man of genius, placed in a pillory to be pelted by a thick-skinned mob, and urged by a sense of his helplessness to utter the bitterest taunts that he can invent.”<sup>2</sup> Like most criticisms

<sup>1</sup> Prefaces to the American “Brantwood Edition” of *Crown of Wild Olive* and *Aratra Pentelici*, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> “Mr. Ruskin’s Recent Writings,” in *Fraser’s Magazine*, June 1874.

CHAP. of Ruskin which are well-founded, this is one which he  
XVIII. has himself anticipated. He speaks of "the bitterness with which he feels the separation between himself and the people round him." He is so "alone in his thoughts and ways" that he wonders sometimes whether it is he, or the world, that is mad. The more he felt himself out of touch with the world round him, the greater licence did he allow to his pen. Also, he wrote without any of the arts of old parliamentary hands in qualifying their statements or leaving open their lines of retreat. Such ways were "inscrutable" to him; and for "qualification of statement" he had "neither time nor need."

To give full licence to his pen meant with Ruskin not only to write with loaded emphasis, but to give rein to playful fancy and to work an abundant vein of irony and paradox. He took a certain pleasure in provoking, stimulating, teasing, and even perplexing his readers. "I tried always in *Fors* to say things, if I could, a little piquantly"; and "whether I succeeded in writing piquantly, or not, I certainly often wrote obscurely." So he wrote afterwards;<sup>1</sup> and in re-reading *Fors* at the same time, he constantly noted in the margin that such and such a passage was "obscure." "People could not generally see the drift," he said at one place; "it is all too fine-run and the mocking too quiet." The book was meant to be read by readers who "use their own wits."<sup>2</sup> In one place he compares the clergy to candle-grease, and in a succeeding Letter he insists to remonstrant correspondents that he meant his words quite literally. This correspondence, he wrote to a personal friend, "tickled" him.<sup>3</sup> To Mr. Allen, he wrote, of another Letter (Jan. 1875), "I'm very glad you enjoy the January *Fors*. I was rather tickled with it myself." He expected all his friends to read the Letters, and to be duly shocked by them. Thus Rawdon Brown seems to have been a little startled by Letter 73, with its suggestion of Doges of Sheffield, and so forth. Ruskin's reply was that his "Papa" might have found much worse things to be shocked at in an earlier Letter.

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. i. ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 40, § 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Stray Letters to a London Bibliophile* (F. S. Ellis), p. 25.

"I'm greatly wondering," he wrote again to his publisher (January 20, 1877), "what people will say to next *Fors*. This January one seems to have waked them up a bit at Sheffield"; and to the same correspondent, a week later, "You'll see a wonderful lot of things exploding in people's eyes soon about our work. *Fors* of February ought to be a choker." Ruskin in this book was often letting off squibs to explode in the path of dull respectability.

## VI

*Fors Clavigera* is, then, a satire in which Ruskin lashes the faults and follies of his age. He does this with pitiless whip and heedless vehemence. The lack of restraint, the note of exaggeration, are obvious. "I perceive," he says, "that I live in the midst of a nation of thieves and murderers; that everybody around me is trying to rob every one else, and that not bravely and strongly, but in the most cowardly and loathsome way of lying trade; that 'Englishman' is now merely another word for blackleg and swindler; and English honour and courtesy, changed to the sneaking and the smiles of a whipped pedlar, an inarticulate Autolycus, with a steam hurdy-gurdy instead of a voice."<sup>1</sup> He proposes to prosecute a search for "men of truth, hating covetousness"—"naturally, in a Christian country, it will be difficult enough." Speaking of foreign wars and domestic misery and sport, he puts it to us "whether it would not be more kind, and less expensive, to make the machinery a little smaller, by taking our sport in shooting babies instead of rabbits." Leslie Stephen's criticism of Ruskin in this mood seems to me admirably just. Ruskin, he says, practises "the art of saying stinging things, of which the essence is to make particular charges which we feel to be true, whilst we are convinced that the tacit generalisation is unfair."<sup>2</sup> His cases are not always, perhaps even not often, fair; but then, as Stephen adds in another essay, though his attacks on

<sup>1</sup> Letter 58. For the following references, see Letters 62 and 24. ings," in *Fraser's Magazine*, June 1874.

<sup>2</sup> "Mr. Ruskin's Recent Writ-



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modern society might be caricatures, yet "clearly there were ugly things to caricature. Whether he bewailed the invasion of country solitudes by railways and the intrusion of suburban villas, or the mean and narrow life of the dwellers in villas, or went further and produced hideous stories of gross brutality in the slums of London or Manchester, he had an unpleasant plausibility. If you tried to reply that such things were not unprecedented, you felt that the line of defence was rather mean, and that even if Ruskin was over-angry, you had no business to be too cool. When I read *Fors* I used always to fancy that I could confute him, and yet to feel uncomfortable that he might be essentially in the right. The evils which had stung so fine a nature to such wrath must at least be grievous."<sup>1</sup> And similarly, with regard to many of the criticisms in *Fors* of the economic foundations of modern society. Take this, for instance:—

"I have seven thousand pounds in what we call the Funds or Founded things; but I am not comfortable about the Founding of them. All that I can see of them is a square bit of paper, with some ugly printing on it, and all that I know of them is that this bit of paper gives me a right to tax you every year, and make you pay me two hundred pounds out of your wages; which is very pleasant for me: but how long will you be pleased to do so? Suppose it should occur to you any summer's day, that you had better not? Where would my seven thousand pounds be? In fact, where are they now? We call ourselves a rich people; but you see this seven thousand pounds of mine has no real existence—it only means that you, the workers, are poorer by two hundred pounds a year than you would be if I hadn't got it. And this is surely a very odd kind of money for a country to boast of. Well, then, besides this, I have a bit of low land at Greenwich, which, as far as I see anything of it, is not money at all, but only mud; and would be of as little use to me as my handful of gravel in the drawer, if it were not that an ingenious person has found out that he can make chimney-pots out of it; and, every quarter, he brings me fifteen pounds off the price of his chimney-pots, so that I am

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<sup>1</sup> "John Ruskin," in the *National Review*, April 1900.

always sympathetically glad when there's a high wind, because then I know my ingenious friend's business is thriving. But suppose it should come into his head, in any less windy month than this April, that he had better bring me none of the price of his chimneys? And even though he should go on, as I hope he will, patiently—and I always give him a glass of wine when he brings me the fifteen pounds)—is this really to be called money of mine? And is the country any richer because, when anybody's chimney-pot is blown down in Greenwich, he must pay something extra, to me, before he can put it on again?"<sup>1</sup>

Dangerous doctrine, perhaps, is here implied; doctrine, at any rate, which needs many qualifications; and yet must it not be admitted that there is an element of force in Ruskin's obstinate questionings, even if one be able to silence the blank misgivings which they suggest?

Ruskin brought to his criticisms and his satire every resource of literary art—badinage, raillery, irony, invective. In two respects, however, *Fors Clavigera* is unlike other satires of the kind, and these are the respects which give to the book its distinctively Ruskinian character. The first is its combination of tenderness with irony. Ruskin's "fiercest imprecations die away," as Mr. Harrison has finely said, "into words as tender as those of Jesus when he wept at the sight of Jerusalem." And with the tenderness was united in Ruskin's work an element of active pity, of hopefulness, of constructive suggestion. Ruskin in very truth, as he once wrote to his father, was no misanthrope.<sup>2</sup> Through all his railing accusations he had still, as Leslie Stephen noted, "a power of conceiving Utopia which Swift would have considered worthy of the philosophers of Laputa."<sup>3</sup> The author of *Fors* and the Master of St. George's Guild might have said with William Blake:—

"I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land."

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 4.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, June 1874.

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The ground of modern England reeked for him with a multitude of murdered men, and its sacred places were defiled. He looked ever backward and forward—backward in imagination to “a land of fruitful vales and pastoral mountains; and a heaven of pleasant sunshine and kindly rain; and a race of pure heart, iron sinew, splendid fame, and constant faith”; forward, in hope and help, to golden days yet to come. “Over those fields of ours the winds of Heaven shall be pure; and, upon them, the work of men shall be done in honour and truth.”<sup>1</sup>

## VII

In no other book does Ruskin confess so plainly as in *Fors Clavigera* the faith that was in him. He regarded it as the end which crowned his work. It summed “the message which, knowing no more as I unfolded the scroll of it, what next would be written there, than a blade of grass knows what the form of its fruit shall be, I have been led on year by year to speak, even to this its end.”<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera* was the end because it endeavoured to show the conditions under which alone great art (itself the product of the happy life of the workman) was possible; the conditions which are required in order that the Sun of Justice may shine upon “gracious laws of beauty and labour.” And in thus crowning his work, Ruskin was led to expound, more definitely than elsewhere, the faith which inspired it. His beliefs changed; the texture, that is, which clothed his conceptions of the spiritual world, were subject to successive modifications. But the abiding substance of his faith is summed in the sonorous words of “St. George’s Creed.”<sup>3</sup> It proclaims the sacredness of Nature as the revelation of God, and the sacredness of Man as the interpreter of God in Nature. It teaches the service of man as the honour of God. And thus the final substance of Ruskin’s practical message is summed up, as he indicates,

<sup>1</sup> Letters 45, 58.<sup>2</sup> Letter 78.<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 336.

in the passages in *Fors* from which the following extracts are taken: <sup>1</sup>—

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“The Law of God concerning man is, that if he acts as God’s servant he shall be rewarded with such pleasure as no heart can conceive nor tongue tell.”

“Bishops cannot take, much less give, account of men’s souls unless they first take and give account of their bodies.”

“Begin therefore to-day to do work for Him, and see that every stroke of this work—be it weak or strong—shall therefore be done in love of God and your neighbour and in hatred of covetousness.”

“To your master Christ you must stand, with your best might; and in this manner only, self-asserting as you may think it, can you confess Him before men.”

“You will find it needful to live, if it be with success, according to God’s Law; and the first uttered article in it is, ‘In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.’”

“Every earthly good and possession will be given you, if you seek first the Kingdom of God and His Justice. If, in the assurance of Faith, you can ask and strive that such kingdom may be with you, though it is not meat and drink, but Justice, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost,—if, in the first terms I put to you for oath, you will do good work, whether you live or die, and so lie down at night, whether hungry or weary, at least in peace of heart and surety of honour;—then, you shall rejoice, in your native land, and on your nursing sea, in all fulness of temporal possession;—then, for you the earth shall bring forth her increase, and for you the floods clap their hands;—throughout your sacred pilgrimage, strangers here and sojourners with God, yet His word shall be with you,—‘the land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is Mine,’ and after your numbered days of happy loyalty, you shall go to rejoice in His Fatherland, and with His people.”

## VIII

Carlyle remarked to Emerson, as we have seen, upon the difficulty of getting Ruskin’s books and pamphlets “owing

<sup>1</sup> Letter 58.



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to the ways he has towards the bibliopolic world." The experiment to which Carlyle thus alluded has considerable interest and importance in the history of the book trade in this country. In starting *Fors Clavigera* Ruskin determined to "retain complete command over the mode of publication." The Letters were to discuss, among other things, principles and methods of modern business; they were to inveigh against the system of credits, discounts, commission, and flamboyant advertisement. Ruskin was one who strove to practise what he preached; therefore it behoved him, as himself a producer of goods for market, to set his own shop in order. In the ordinary publishing trade there was "the published price" of a book, but this did not represent with any certainty either what the consumer had to pay to the bookseller, or what the bookseller had to pay to the publisher. There were "trade discounts" of varying amounts to the booksellers, wholesale or retail, while the booksellers, in turn, either charged the "published price" to customers, or gave varying discounts according as motives of competition with rivals or other conditions of their business might suggest. All this was wholly inconsistent with the gospel of fixed prices, cash down, and confessed profits which Ruskin meant to preach in *Fors Clavigera*. He decided, accordingly, to cut himself free from the customs of the trade by becoming his own publisher, and by supplying *Fors* on a new system. The published price was to be the actual price charged alike to the booksellers and to private purchasers who bought direct from the author-publisher. There was to be no credit allowed, and no abatement given on quantity or for any other reason. "The trade may charge a proper and acknowledged profit for their trouble in retailing the book. Then the public will know what they are about, and so will tradesmen." The "absolute refusal of credit or abatement is only the carrying out of a part of my general method of political economy; and I adopt this method of sale because I think authors ought not to be too proud to sell their own books, any more than painters to sell their own pictures." And similarly he declined to advertise his wares, by announcing that "no intelligent workman should

pass a day without acquainting himself with the entirely original views contained in these pages." For the first three years copies of the Letters were sent to the press, but in 1874 Ruskin stopped even this form of advertisement.

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In order to carry out his scheme Ruskin appointed as his agent Mr. George Allen, who was started, at a week's notice, and without any previous experience of the business, on the career of publisher. His "publisher's warehouse" was first his cottage at Keston, and afterwards a shed in the garden of his villa at Orpington. The method of publication adopted from the first with *Fors Clavigera* was gradually extended to all Ruskin's books, and first among them to the enlarged edition of *Sesame and Lilies* which he issued in June 1871, as the opening volume of a Revised Series of his Works. The new system involved a breach with his old publisher, Mr. George Smith. Ruskin's intention at first had been to apply the new method of publication only to his new books; and, in order to be quit of business worries, he was minded to sell outright to Mr. Smith the copyright of all his earlier works. There proved, however, to be a wide difference between the estimates which publisher and author respectively placed upon the value of the copyright, and by degrees Ruskin withdrew the whole of his books from Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.'s hands. The fact is worth noting that the opposition to fixed prices came not in the first instance from Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., but from the booksellers. "Smith was not averse," says his biographer, "to making the experiment which Ruskin desired, but the booksellers did not welcome the new plan of sale, and the circulation of Ruskin's books declined."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Smith warned his old friend, more in sorrow than in anger, that the new plan would prove a melancholy failure. The booksellers, in whose interest Ruskin had conceived his plan, were bitterly opposed to it, and for some time there was a more or less general boycott of his books by the trade. Ridicule was poured upon the idea of publishing "in a field in Kent." But Ruskin held on firmly, and gradually Mr. Allen gathered together a large nucleus

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, vol. i.

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of customers. Ruskin, meanwhile, was coming more and more, owing to the distribution of his inherited fortune, to depend for his livelihood upon the sale of his books, and in 1882 he agreed to a modification of his original plan. Instead of selling a book to the booksellers at a fixed price to which they were to add whatever sum they chose before selling it again to the public, he fixed the price at which it was sold to the public, giving the trade a fixed discount. Thus there was one uniform price, say 6s., at which customers everywhere could obtain the book. The discount given to the trade was not large enough to allow the booksellers to undersell each other, by offering the book at 5s. or 4s. 6d., but was sufficient to leave them "a living wage" for the cost and trouble of retailing. With this modification, Ruskin's experiment in publishing became a great success. The publisher lived and thrived, and the author received from his books a steady income; for many years it was as much as £4000 a year, a sum far in excess of his former receipts, and probably larger than that of any other didactic writer of the time.

Ruskin, it will thus be seen, was the pioneer of the system now commonly adopted under the phrase "the net book system." The "unpractical" visionary was proved to know the booksellers' business better than they knew it themselves. They ridiculed his plan and did all they could to strangle the new system in its infancy. The plan was initiated, as Ruskin said in 1871, "not in hostility to booksellers, but, as I think they will find eventually, with a just regard to their interest." These words have been entirely fulfilled, for in 1906 it was stated by the Publishers' Association that "the Net Book System was established eight years ago *at the earnest request of the booksellers themselves* to keep them out of the disastrous condition to which the under-cutting of prices among themselves had reduced their business."

Ruskin's experiment met, it will have been seen, with the usual reception of sound pioneer-work; it was not the only case in which the views and efforts of this unpractical dreamer have passed through the three stages of ridicule, modification, and general acceptance.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE ST. GEORGE'S GUILD

"Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."  
BROWNING : *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

#### I

THE story of the St. George's Guild, of which *Fors Clavigera* was in one of its aspects the monthly journal, is in part a study in Utopia, and in part a record of things actually done. Ruskin's schemes, like those of other builders of Utopia, were large and picturesque. St. George's Company, or Guild, was to embrace all holy and humble men of heart. Its main effort was designed to show "how much food-producing land might be recovered by well-applied labour from the barren or neglected districts of nominally cultivated countries."<sup>1</sup> It was to purchase land and to employ labourers upon it "under the carefulest supervision and with every proper means of mental instruction." Other lands, not purchased by the Guild, would be cultivated and managed by its "Companions" in the same way. Manufactures would not cease, but agriculture would be revived and extended. The Guild, under the name of the Society of Mont Rose, was to "extend its operations over the continent of Europe, and number its members ultimately by myriads." On the lands of the Guild there were to be no machines

<sup>1</sup> *General Statement*, § 1. The following summary in the text is put together from various passages —especially from *Master's Reports*, 1879 and 1881, and *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 17, 37, 58, 63.



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moved by artificial fire; but machinery, moved by natural forces, was to be employed on the largest scale. Floods were to be averted; fens to be drained; sea-erosion to be checked. The landlords were to be "men of independent fortune, devoting gifts and ingenuity to the service of the Guild, and owing their lordship to the fact that they could work as much better than their labourers as a good knight than his soldiers." The labourers were to be "young people bred on old estates"; the commandants over them, "veteran soldiers"; for Ruskin had "observed constantly in historical readings the beneficence of strict military order in peace, and the justice, sense, and kindness of good officers acting unrestrictedly in civil capacities." There would be no absentee landlords, and no squandering of treasure obtained from the earth upon the vicious pleasures of great cities. There were to be fixed rents, which, however, would for the most part be put back into the land in the form of improvements. Cultivation would thus be intensive; but all natural beauties would be religiously protected, and at chosen spots there would be parks in which all harmless animals would be preserved in the beauty of wild life. The organisation of the Society was to depend on the Master as its head, who was to be invested with supreme and dictatorial powers. Under him were to come the "Marshals"—officers, like Roman Pro-Consuls, having great districts subject to them. Next in order came the Landlords, selected as aforesaid. "Marshals" and "Landlords" were to be called "Comites Ministrantes"—Companions of the Guild who spent themselves in public service. Under them would come "Comites Militantes"—Companions of the rank and file, working on the Company's lands as land-agents, tenant farmers, hired labourers, or tradesmen. And last of all would be the "Comites Consilii" ("Friends in Council")—Companions pledged to St. George's Vow and giving tenths of their income to the Guild, but living their own lives and not resident on St. George's lands. There were also, it seems, to be "outside adherents," looked upon as friends, hoped for as Companions, and distinguished by badges of "square bits of gold." Dress in all classes would

be as determined as the heraldry of coronets. There would be no idle rich, and no oppressed poor. Luxury would be realised for all, but luxury exquisite and refined. Landladies would wear beautiful frocks, and peasant women would carry their wealth, like girls of the Alpine valleys, in gold and silver ornaments for their hair. The agricultural life was to be combined with refinement and with knowledge of all useful crafts. The boys were to be carpenters and to make good household furniture; the girls, to cook the finest of Yorkshire pies. There would be model schools and museums on every estate, and each cottage would have its Shepherd's Library and selected pictures, ordained for it by the Master. Currency was to be based on staples of food and clothing, and to be stamped with Florentine designs. The golden age and mild Saturnian reign were to return among men as the result of St. George's labours for Merrie England.

Such was the ideal. The actual realisation was a Master who, when wanted to discuss legal deeds, was often drawing leaves of *anagallis tenella*; a society of Companions, few and uninfluential; some cottages in Wales; twenty acres of partly cleared woodland in Worcestershire; a few bleak acres in Yorkshire; and a single museum. The large schemes for the reclamation of waste land and the novel use on a great scale of tides and streams shrunk into some minute gardening experiments at Brantwood. The descent from the ideal to the real is long and steep; in one sense, ludicrous also. But it should not be supposed that Ruskin gravely intended to institute forthwith everything that he suggested. It is necessary to remember, in reading his writings on these subjects, that "St. George" stands for an ideal, as well as for practical counsels. Thus, when he amuses himself with designs and legends for "St. George's" ducats, it is not to be imagined that he intended to infringe the royal prerogative in the coining of money. He was legislating for his "island of Barataria," as he calls it elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> rather than for the actual estates of St. George's Guild. But the distinction between his

<sup>1</sup> *A Joy for Ever*, § 65.

CHAP. XIX. visionary Utopia and his scheme for an actual Guild was not always clear on the surface, and the confusion may have deterred many people from answering to his call.

Again, with regard to what seemed to him immediately practicable, he did not profess to be a political leader, setting out to found a colony or an ideal community.<sup>1</sup> He hoped at the start that such leaders would arise at his call. When they failed him, he resolved on some small scale to make a beginning and give an example of his own. But, all along, he was far more intent on laying down principles than on carrying them out in detail. The general principles are clear enough, and the scheme of his Guild was in itself perfectly practicable. His first proposal was simply that men and women should league themselves together, under a pledge to give a tenth of their possessions to definite public service. He set the example himself, and proposed that the "St. George's Fund" should primarily be expended in the purchase of land for settlement. Ruskin recognised a little earlier than the rest of the world a social need which everybody now perceives. The only sound condition of society was, he held, one in which every man worked for his living; and of all forms of work, the healthiest and most certainly useful was work upon the land. This was "the main message of St. George." So far, therefore, as St. George's Guild became operative at all, it was to be a land-owning company. The members of the Company were to pursue their own avocations, banded together only by loyalty to the eight articles of St. George's Vow:—

"(1) I trust in the Living God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things and creatures visible and invisible.

I trust in the kindness of His law, and the goodness of His work.

And I will strive to love Him, and keep His law, and see His work, while I live.

(2) I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, the fulness of its mercy, and the joy of its love.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 49.

And I will strive to love my neighbour as myself, and, even when I cannot, will act as if I did.

- (3) I will labour, with such strength and opportunity as God gives me, for my own daily bread ; and all that my hand finds to do, I will do with my might.
- (4) I will not deceive, or cause to be deceived, any human being for my gain or pleasure ; nor hurt, or cause to be hurt, any human being for my gain or pleasure ; nor rob, or cause to be robbed, any human being for my gain or pleasure.
- (5) I will not kill nor hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but will strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard and perfect all natural beauty, upon the earth.
- (6) I will strive to raise my own body and soul daily into higher powers of duty and happiness ; not in rivalry or contention with others, but for the help, delight, and honour of others, and for the joy and peace of my own life.
- (7) I will obey all the laws of my country faithfully ; and the orders of its monarch, and of all persons appointed to be in authority under its monarch, so far as such laws or commands are consistent with what I suppose to be the law of God ; and when they are not, or seem in anywise to need change, I will oppose them loyally and deliberately, not with malicious, concealed, or disorderly violence.
- (8) And with the same faithfulness, and under the limits of the same obedience, which I render to the laws of my country, and the commands of its rulers, I will obey the laws of the Society called of St. George, into which I am this day received ; and the orders of its masters, and of all persons appointed to be in authority under its masters, so long as I remain a Companion, called of St. George."

The labourers employed on the land of the Guild were to have fixed rents and decent conditions of life. The Guild was also to show, by schools and Museums, what should be done for the education of the labourer, whether in town or country. "To divert a little of the large current of English charity and justice from watching disease to



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guarding health, and from the punishment of crime to the reward of virtue; to establish, here and there, exercise grounds instead of hospitals, and training schools instead of penitentiaries”—such were the simple objects of the Guild; the scheme, as Ruskin adds, “is not, if you will slowly take it to heart, a frantic imagination.”<sup>1</sup> He knew what was wanted, and his scheme under proper leadership was not impracticable; but he knew also that he was not the man to carry it through. His knowledge “did not qualify him, nor did the nature of his general occupations permit him, to undertake the personal direction of any farming operations.” He was perfectly aware that his strength did not lie in such directions. His Company was but “a raft”; and he only “a makeshift Master.”<sup>2</sup> His purpose was to point the way; his hope, that others would be found to take the lead in walking in it. But there was no response, and Ruskin, therefore, continued his “makeshift” work. The sense of disappointment weighed heavily upon him. What made him mad, he used to say in later years, was not his work, but the feeling that nothing came of it. He could not desist from the work, and yet all the while he knew that it was not his proper work. His was the tortured effort of a man who was driven by imperious call into a duty to which he felt that his powers and opportunities were unequal. And this also explains the intensity of the mental strain; but for the present I must continue the story.

## II

“St. George’s Fund” was started in 1871 by Ruskin’s own gift of £7000—a tithe, as he then calculated, of his fortune. A first gift of land came to him in 1875. His draft for the constitution of the Company was published in July 1875. The legal difficulties, however, were many, for the latent capacities of the Companies Act of 1867 for covering various kinds of limited-liability associations for philanthropic or

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 9.

passages, see *Fors*, Letters 37, 50,

<sup>2</sup> For this and the preceding 67, 81, and *Master’s Report*, 1879.

semi-philanthropic purposes had at the time been little explored. Ultimately this idea was found to meet all the requirements of the case. The necessary notice of "Application for a Licence of the Board of Trade" was given in the public press on August 6, 1878. The Memorandum and Articles of Association, in which the requirements of legal form did not suffice to obliterate all traces of Ruskin's style, were duly filed October 14, 1878, and a Licence to the Guild of St. George to hold lands was granted on October 22 by "the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council appointed for the consideration of matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations." The Memorandum and Articles have given hints to more than one legal firm entrusted with the task of forming "Companies" on somewhat similar lines. The constitution of the Guild of St. George had taken three years. A correspondence with his solicitors is extant, showing how much time, thought, and trouble Ruskin had expended on the task; though it is also the case that sometimes, when his instructions were wanted, he was not found accessible. But at the very time when all the initial difficulties seemed to be surmounted he was stricken down. He gradually recovered health, but his energies were to be much dissipated, and, again after a few years, his days were clouded over, so that the Guild fell into a state of suspended animation.

Yet something was accomplished, and more attempted, on the agricultural side of St. George's Guild. A cottage and a small plot of land were acquired for a Museum at Walkley, near Sheffield (Chap. XX.). Some cottages on freehold land at Barmouth were given by Mrs. Talbot. Twenty acres of woodland, partly cleared, were given at Bewdley. A tiny plot was bought at Cloughton, near Scarborough. Thirteen acres of garden and fields, with farmhouse and buildings, were bought at Totley in Derbyshire, on the outskirts of Sheffield.<sup>1</sup> This land was bought by Ruskin in response to

<sup>1</sup> This land, bought by Ruskin for the Guild at a cost of £2200 in 1877, is in the parish of *Mickley*; but *Totley* is the postal address, and *Abbeydale* is not far off. Ruskin, somewhat to the confusion

of his readers, calls the property by all these different names in different writings. In *Fors*, he preferred "Abbeydale"; he liked to think that St. George's properties had pretty names.

CHAP. a request from some of the working men of Sheffield for  
XIX. allotments. Some of the men, it seems, were shoemakers, and they seem to have had ideas of "vote of the majority" which gave him uneasiness. The proposed allotments had a short and, I believe, somewhat stormy career, and Ruskin fell back upon a favourite resource on occasions of this kind; that is to say, he called his old gardener, David Downs, to the rescue. The land was to be put "under cultivation, with the object of showing the best methods of managing fruit-trees in the climate of northern England; with attached greenhouses and botanic garden for the orderly display of all interesting European plants." But "the climate of northern England" had views of its own, antagonistic to Ruskin's schemes. A little later the estate is dismissed curtly as "very poor land." "Suppose we sell all that good-for-nothing land at Totley," Ruskin wrote to Downs (April 24, 1881), "and take somebody else in, for once—if we can—instead of being always taken in ourselves, for a change?" It is in very truth a cold, bleak spot; but the tenant, to whom it is now let, makes, it is believed, a fair living out of the land. Of the property in land and houses, the most interesting of St. George's Estates is the one at Barmouth. No existing tenant was disturbed; the Guild executed all repairs; rents were never raised, but punctual payment was insisted upon. There is nothing novel, or even unusual where kindly landlords are concerned, in the arrangement; but St. George's Cottages at Barmouth happen to have a certain character of their own. Ruskin made friends with many of the tenants when he visited Barmouth in 1876. Among them was an old man, commonly known as "Garibaldi" from some resemblance to the Italian hero. He was a scholar and read some of "the Master's" books. "He says some very good things," was the old man's verdict; "but it is a pity he does not write better English, for then I could understand it better." But the most interesting tenant of St. George's Cottages was M. Auguste Guyard, who, at the time of Ruskin's visit, was living at Rock Terrace. It was a happy chance—a stroke of some favouring "Fors"—that brought this French philosopher into connexion



with Ruskin. For M. Guyard, the friend of Victor Hugo, had himself been a social reformer. In his native village of Frotey-les-Vesoul, he had tried to establish a *commune modèle*. His experiment is described in his *Lettres aux Gens de Frotey*,<sup>1</sup> and it closely resembles the ideal which Ruskin had set before himself in the Guild of St. George. "These things which I am but now discovering and trying to teach," exclaimed Ruskin, "*you* knew and taught when I was a child." When Paris was besieged in 1870 M. Guyard sought refuge in England; a cottage at Barmouth was offered to him, and there he lived until his death in 1882. He was a great lover of animal-companions, among which he numbered a tame hawk; and it was to him that Victor Hugo, when going into exile, entrusted his best-beloved Persian cat. "It was a strange fate which brought him from Paris, from a circle of literary and philosophical friends, to end his days in a remote English village, doctoring his poor neighbours, teaching Welsh peasant women to make vegetable soups, and trying by experiments to discover what herbs and trees would grow best in his rocky mountain ground, and best resist the storms from the Atlantic that often swept across his terraced gardens."<sup>2</sup> The story of this tenant of St. George reads like many a page of *Fors Clavigera* translated into real life. M. Guyard lies buried on a spot chosen by himself on the mountain-side, and on the gravestone are some lines which he dictated to his daughter before his death. He describes himself as a Sower—as one who, amid a thousand difficulties, sowed the True, the Good, the Beautiful. Such work, he added, "finds no recompense in this world." But "Not on the vulgar mass called 'work' must sentence pass." This tenant of St. George was one of those for whom, as for the Master of the Guild, the final account must comprehend many "thoughts hardly to be packed into a narrow act." It is pleasant to know that Mrs. Talbot has given a large tract of heather, grass, and rock, lying above and to the

<sup>1</sup> Published at Paris in 1863. See also his *Des Droits, des Devoirs, et des Constitutions, au point de vue de la Destinée Humaine*. A copy of the book (1882), which was dedi-

cated to Ruskin, is in the Ruskin Museum.

<sup>2</sup> *Ruskin's Social Experiment at Barmouth*, by Blanche Atkinson (1900).



CHAP. west of St. George's Cottages, into the hands of the National  
XIX. Trust Fund, which holds it "for the enjoyment of the people of Barmouth for ever."<sup>1</sup>

A few industrial experiments were also undertaken in connexion with St. George's Guild. Ruskin gave encouragement to Mr. Rydings, a Companion of the Guild, in his efforts to revive, maintain, and extend a manufacture of home-spun wool at Laxey, in the Isle of Man, and suggested the adoption of "the square yard of Laxey homespun of a given weight" as "one of the standards of value in St. George's currency."<sup>2</sup> Ruskin himself, it should be stated, never visited the mill, and it was not found possible to continue the industry on the lines of hand-spinning and hand-weaving. The Guild has no longer any interest in the mill, which continues to manufacture woollen cloths.

Another industrial enterprise was a revival of the Langdale Linen Industry. Ruskin mentions in *Fors* "the spinning on the old spinning-wheel, with most happy and increasingly acknowledged results, systematised here among our Westmorland Hills by Mr. Albert Fleming."<sup>3</sup> The daleswomen spun the flax at their homes, and the thread was woven by hand, making a most excellent texture of great durability. Since the hand spinning and weaving were started, the idea has spread in many directions, and there are similar industries and schools of "art" linen, in many parts of the country. These are undertakings which, however laudable, are small, and perhaps not all of them are conducted on commercial lines. Of a different kind is another industrial experiment which owes its inception to Ruskin's teaching. This is the Co-operative Mill of Mr. George Thomson at Huddersfield. Ruskin warmly encouraged Mr. Thomson (one of the Trustees and now Master of the Guild) on "the momentous and absolutely foundational step in all that is just and wise in the establishment of these relations with your workmen."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *St. George*, vol. iv. p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors*, Letter 72 ("Notes and Correspondence").

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter 95.

<sup>4</sup> See *Ruskin and Modern Business*, reprinted from the *Spectator*, Feb. 17, 1900.

## III

The Guild of St. George, however, has not revolutionised the conditions of modern industry; and the agricultural enterprises, into which its main effort was to have been put, were by no means a practical success. It may be that they were not given a fair chance. Ruskin himself says that he did not give it, and the men who were attracted by his schemes and encouraged by his enthusiastic promises were not always of the right stuff. Some of them were, it seems, infected by "infernal notions of equality and independence"<sup>1</sup>; others perhaps found St. George a harder taskmaster than they bargained for. At any rate St. George's farms, it is to be feared, produced very little except a plentiful crop of disappointments. Ruskin's ideal settlements, as pictured in the pages of *Fors Clavigera*, are charming; but the realities were too often grim or grotesque, and sometimes both.<sup>2</sup> Yet his root-idea was right, and many of his particular suggestions have by other persons and in other ways been carried out. The memory of the more idealistic side of St. George's Guild was preserved in the name "Ruskin" given to a co-operative community which flourished for some years in Tennessee, U.S.A.<sup>3</sup> In his own country Ruskin's experiment was, as it were, a sign-post pointing to that "return to the land" which is now on so many sides being attempted. "Quixotic," "unpractical," "visionary," his schemes were called; but, after all, were they not in what has turned out to be a main stream of tendency, in these days of legislation, action, and discussions directed towards allotments, small holdings, afforestation, industrial villages, garden cities? Something, too, was accomplished by

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 66.

<sup>2</sup> Many of Ruskin's objects were very much those of the Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905. The inherent difficulties in such efforts may be judged from the speech of the President of the

Local Government Board in the House of Commons, February 20, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> An illustrated account of this community (by Harold J. Shepstone) appeared in the *Wide World Magazine* for June 1899.

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Ruskin in the way of stimulus, suggestion, and sympathy given to individual friends or disciples. A particular instance may here be noted. A devoted friend of many years' standing, the late Mr. Charles H. Woodd, shared to the full Ruskin's longing to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. On his property in Yorkshire Mr. Woodd realised this aim. What was once a wild stretch of moorland was drained and planted; and, though the sporting amenities of the estate were perforce destroyed, it was redeemed as a habitation for men. Again, Ruskin's hopes for the creation of enclaves, in which animal-life might be studied in its natural state, have found some realisation; for under the Wild Birds Protection Acts of 1880 and later years sanctuaries within which no birds may be killed have been established in some English counties. Ruskin's memory was preserved in connexion with such schemes, when his friend, Mr. Henry Willett, frequently mentioned in *Fors*, made over to the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire a piece of land at Cothill, near Abingdon, under the name of "The Ruskin Plot." The land, about five acres in extent, comprises woodland, marsh, bog, and water, and contains many local and rare specimens of animal and vegetable life; and the donor's desire was, as Ruskin wished, that the plot should be kept for all time in its natural condition. In these and many other ways persons and movements have arisen to carry out plans, "which," says Ruskin, "would have been good for little if their coping could at once have been conjectured or foretold in their foundations. It has been throughout my trust," he adds, "that if Death should write on these, 'What this man began to build, he was not able to finish,' God may also write on them, not in anger, but in aid, 'A stronger than he cometh.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Love's Meinie*.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE RUSKIN MUSEUM

“Every house of the Muses is an Interpreter’s by the way-side, or rather, a place of oracle and interpretation in one. And the right function of every museum, to simple persons, is the manifestation to them of what is lovely in the life of Nature, and heroic in the life of Men.”—*Letters on a Museum* (1880).

THE record of St. George’s Guild has had to tell, if of some suggestive experiments on a small scale, yet in the practical sphere of a generous failure. That of St. George’s Museum is the story of a considerable success; and, after all, it was to the work of the Museum that Ruskin personally devoted himself. “There are thousands of men in England,” he says, “able to conduct our business affairs better than I, when once they see it their duty to do so,” but “I do not believe there is another man in England able to organise our elementary lessons in Natural History and Art.”<sup>1</sup> The St. George’s Museum at Sheffield, though falling far short of what he hoped to make of it, is certainly one of the most interesting and characteristic of Ruskin’s Works.

#### I

The establishment of the Museum at Sheffield was largely due to an old pupil of Ruskin’s at the Working Men’s College, Mr. Henry Swan. He had settled at Walkley, and at his invitation Ruskin went down to Sheffield to meet a small representative body of working men. He was so charmed with them, and they with him, that he determined to make Sheffield the site of the first Museum of the St. George’s Guild. His intention was

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 81.



CHAP. announced in Letter 56 (August 1875) of *Fors Clavigera*.  
 XX. The idea which he then had more particularly in his mind was a museum arranged especially for "workers in iron"; and this was the essential reason for the selection of Sheffield. Also the town is "within easy reach of beautiful scenery and of the best art of English hands."<sup>1</sup> Early in 1876 he reported that he had appointed Mr. Swan as curator. The site chosen was characteristic. The Museum was worth walking a mile or two, Ruskin thought, to see, and he perched it therefore on a hill, in the midst of green fields, and in command of a fine view. It was a stiff climb to Walkley. This was symbolic, Ruskin used to say; "the climb to knowledge and truth is ever steep, and the gems found at the top are small, but precious and beautiful." From the front door of the Walkley Museum to the right is an extensive view of the Valley of the Don, with the woods of Wharncliffe Crag far away in the distance; while to the left, and also to be seen from the Museum windows, is that Rivelin valley which Elliott, the Corn Law rhymer, made his favourite resort.<sup>3</sup> The building in which the Museum was placed was a small stone cottage, which had to house both the curator and the specimens. It was in a tiny room in the cottage that the Ruskin Museum was gradually collected. It was a case of "much treasure in a little room," and the number of students and spectators daily increased. In the visitors' book it is interesting to note the places from which pilgrims came—London, Leeds, Hull, Manchester, Chester, Birmingham, Canada, New York, Australia, and even China. Some of these pilgrims lodged in neighbouring cottages, and visited the Museum day after day for as long as six weeks together. The secret of the attractiveness of the little Museum was its adherence to two golden rules, which are too often ignored in more imposing institutions. In the first place, there was no confusing mass of heterogeneous objects. At South Kensington, said Ruskin once

<sup>1</sup> *General Statement*, § 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Reminiscences of Ruskin," by Howard Swan, in the *Westminster Gazette* (January 24, 1900).

<sup>3</sup> See "Ribbledin; or, a Christening," in the *Poetical Works of Ebenezer Elliott*, vol. ii. p. 75.

(but things are now ordered better), "I lost myself in a Cretan labyrinth of military ironmongery, advertisements of spring blinds, model fish-farming, and plaster bathing nymphs with a year's smut on all the noses of them; and had to put myself in charge of a policeman to get out again."<sup>1</sup> In his own Museum there were few things to see, but everything was co-ordinated in an intelligible scheme of artistic education. And in the second place, whatever there was, was beautiful and good of its kind. The result was, as Ruskin was able to say, that every visitor, of whatever class, to the little Walkley Museum, who had any real love for Art, acknowledged "the interest and value of the things collected in its single room."<sup>2</sup> The governing ideas were well stated in the "Preliminary Catalogue" compiled in 1888 by Mr. Howard Swan (son of the first curator):—

"The Museum contains specimens, copies, casts, etc., selected by John Ruskin, of the truly greatest of human art of the times of the highest development in each branch, and from those parts of the world where they best flourished; so arranged and explained as to be:—

"First: *a readily accessible repository of Specimens of the finest work hitherto done*, whether in Painting, Illumination, Engraving, Drawing, or Sculpture, etc., and *of the finest natural productions in the shape of crystallised Gems and Precious Stones*; it 'will have nothing in it but what deserves respect in Art, or admiration in Nature.'

"Secondly: *a Guide to the Rise and Development of Nations*, as evidenced in their art.

"Thirdly: *A School of Drawing and Painting*, with examples and instructions, after the manner of the old Tuscan masters, as set forth in Mr. Ruskin's *The Laws of Fésolé*, in which things interesting in natural history, or in legend, are utilised as drawing copies, while a true system of training the eye and hand is taught."

Henry Swan, the first curator, was a man of original character, a devoted disciple of Ruskin, sharing enthusiastically

<sup>1</sup> *A Museum or Picture Gallery* (1880), § 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Master's Report*, 1885, § 4.

CHAP. "the Master's" artistic creed and social hopes. He took  
XX. great pains to make visitors to the Museum derive some real instruction from the examples there collected; and he also sought to interest working men in Ruskin's wider schemes. On occasions when Ruskin visited Sheffield, Swan would arrange gatherings of working men to meet the Master; the curator's homely little room, half kitchen, half parlour, was the scene of more than one conference between them and Ruskin. His talk on such occasions was of the kind that I have described in the case of the Working Men's College<sup>1</sup>—ranging discursively from art to social conditions and back again to art. "I see the room," writes a visitor who was present on one of these occasions at Walkley, "as I saw it then:—

"Mr. Ruskin's own drawing of the mountains, against the wall opposite the window; the delicately lovely water-colour of Coblenz, by the fireplace, the glorious opals, sapphires, emeralds, amethysts, and agates, in the glass cases; the boxes near the door holding etchings by Dürer and other great masters; the piles of books in the corner of splendid paintings of insects, shells, fishes and birds; the magnificently bound books; the rare specimens of cloisonné enamelled vases; and the window itself framing that summer night a bit of scenery that would have delighted Turner, and did delight his expositor. Presently Mr. Ruskin entered. He greeted us all with that exquisite courtesy which is characteristic of him. Mr. Swan's face beamed with rare delight. The master chose a seat by the window, and after a few questions in regard to the subject on which we wished to have his counsel, began at once one of those monologues to which his hearers listened with breathless attention. The speech flowed on like a mountain stream, broken as it runs into falls that hold each its own shattered rainbow. The voice was a perfect medium for every vagrant fancy that struck across the current of his thought, and for the deeper speech in which the heart and not the fancy spoke."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 380.

Holmes, *Sheffield Independent*, Jan. 5, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> "An Evening with Ruskin at Walkley," by the Rev. T. W.

That Ruskin had a way of putting his hearers very much at their ease is shown by an incident of another conference. A local working celebrity, whose forte was phrenology, got up in the middle of a discussion and, laying a rough paw on the Master's bump, remarked, "Ah, lad, tha's plenty of self-esteem."<sup>1</sup> On these occasions Ruskin used to stay at a little grocer's shop in the village of Walkley. Here as everywhere, he would be up at sunrise, writing and sketching, and a young friend who visited him there found him drawing the cottage and trees on the window of his bedroom in illustration of the laws of perspective.<sup>1</sup> In 1879 Prince Leopold opened the Firth College at Sheffield, and on that occasion Ruskin had the pleasure of receiving him at the Walkley Museum. He pointed out to the Prince the beautiful view from the windows; showed him some of the pictures—the Madonna and Child attributed to Verrocchio, the studies from Carpaccio; described the arrangement of the engravings and photographs; and detained him for some time before the illuminated MSS., the minerals, and the precious stones. "I want," said Ruskin, "to get everything beautiful, and to induce the workmen to combine with scientific training the study of beauty in art and nature." The Prince had taken much interest in Ruskin's scheme, and had made it the subject of an eloquent eulogy which has been printed in an earlier chapter.<sup>2</sup>

Prince Leopold was presented on this occasion with a bust of Ruskin, the work of Mr. Benjamin Creswick, afterwards modelling master at the Birmingham School of Art, then a Sheffield artisan, whose artistic gifts were discovered by the Walkley Museum. A young grinder strolled one Saturday afternoon into the Museum. Its contents interested him, and he fell into conversation with the curator. The spark was quickened, and the grinder became a sculptor. He borrowed some photographs of Ruskin from Mr. Swan, and from these he set to work to model a bust. It was doubtless rough and crude, but Ruskin's discerning eyes detected the talent which was struggling to find expression.

<sup>1</sup> "Reminiscences of Ruskin," by Howard Swan (as cited above).

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 184.



CHAP. XX. Mr. Swan was shortly afterwards at Brantwood; and "whilst there," writes Mr. Creswick in reference to this incident, "he induced Ruskin to give me a sitting for a bust. This was early in September 1877. After the first sitting of an hour the Professor asked me how many more I should require. 'Five,' I replied. 'After what I have seen of your work,' said he, 'I will give you as many as you want.'" <sup>1</sup> Ruskin encouraged the artist to persevere, and put him into a position to do so. Another artist discovered by the Walkley Museum is Mr. Frank Saltfleet. He was a cabinet-maker, who used to study in the Museum, "Will he be a master?" asked the curator. "Why, Swan," replied Ruskin, "Saltfleet is a master." <sup>2</sup>

## II

The collections which Ruskin had by this time brought together for the St. George's Guild were far too extensive for the tiny Museum at Walkley. He thereupon planned successively an enlargement of the Museum, the building of a new Museum at Sheffield, and the building of a new one on the Guild's land at Bewdley. In a number of *Fors*, issued in 1880, he invited the British public to assist him to provide a new building, "decorated on the outside with plain and easily-worked slabs of Derbyshire marble," and to contain inside "a working man's Bodleian Library." <sup>3</sup> Influential citizens of Sheffield, on hearing of these plans, came forward, but negotiations with Ruskin fell through on the point of control. In 1885 Ruskin announced his scheme of building a museum at Bewdley, and invited public subscriptions for the purpose. The appeal was repeated in the following year, and again in the Catalogue of an Exhibition of Drawings belonging to St. George's Guild. At this exhibition, plans drawn for the proposed Museum by Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *John Ruskin*, by M. H. Spielmann, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> "Reminiscences of Ruskin," by Howard Swan (as cited above). An exhibition of drawings by Mr. Saltfleet ("From London to the

Sea") was held at the Fine Art Society's rooms in 1900, and noticed in the *Athenæum* of January 20 as the work of "a new landscapist."

<sup>3</sup> Letter 88.

E. R. Robson were shown. No response, however, was forthcoming. The Ruskin Museum of his imagination, as described in many of his writings, was destined to remain there. The neglect of his appeal by the public was, however, Sheffield's opportunity. In 1886 the Corporation had purchased the Meersbrook estate of forty acres, and they suggested that Ruskin should transfer the Walkley Museum to the house in this Park. He had not, however, as yet abandoned all hope of receiving help to build a new museum of his own, and he declined the Corporation's offer; though, as appears from a letter to the Mayor, he generously offered to present any museum which should be established at Meersbrook both with drawings and with minerals. Presently, however, failing health and vanishing hopes wrought a change, and in 1889 it was definitely decided that St. George's Museum should be moved from Walkley to Meersbrook. The Guild on its part agreed to lend the contents of the Museum to the Corporation for a period of twenty years (which term has since been renewed); the Corporation agreed to provide suitable accommodation, and to defray all the costs of maintenance. The house in Meersbrook Park—a spacious, if not very beautiful, mansion of the Georgian period—was suitably decorated and arranged; the collections were transferred, and on April 15, 1890, the new Museum was opened by Lord Carlisle.

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### III

The Ruskin Museum, as it now exists, represents not a complete realisation of his ideal Museum, as he describes it in his books, but such fulfilment of his ideas as the circumstances have rendered possible. In particular, he had to abandon his hopes with regard to a school of iron-work; the arrangement of various rooms and departments, as suggested by him, was never carried out; sculpture did not receive the prominence which he had desired; and the charming picture drawn in *Fors*<sup>1</sup> of a needlework-room was only a dream. Again, the treasures which are the property of St.

<sup>1</sup> Letter 95.

CHAP. George's Guild, or which Ruskin intended for such, were  
XX. much scattered. Some are at Oxford, some at Whitelands, and in various other schools and colleges; while others, again, cannot now be traced. Also, Ruskin himself had no part in the final arrangement of the Museum. By the time that the transfer to Meersbrook Park took place his working days were over, and Ruskin himself never saw the present Ruskin Museum. The second curator, Mr. William White, who superintended the removal to Meersbrook, was, however, thoroughly imbued with Ruskin's ideas, and the tradition is faithfully observed by his successor, Mr. Gill Parker, the present curator.

What, then, were Ruskin's ideas in this matter? I have glanced at them already; but it should be noted further that he always drew a sharp distinction between central Museums, which should be store-houses for the research of specialists or advanced students, and local Museums which should be for "simple persons." The popular Museum was not to be either a Sunday School for children or a place of entertainment for idlers.<sup>2</sup> It was to be "a temple of the Muses" for intelligent study. There must be "no superabundance and no disorder"; the purpose of the place is to give "an example of perfect order of elegance," containing "nothing crowded, nothing unnecessary, nothing puzzling." It should contain little; but nothing that is not good in its kind, and everything should be explained thoroughly.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with these ideas, the Ruskin Museum, is, as compared with others, small in the number of its possessions, and, even so, only selected portions of them are on view at any given moment. From time to time the normal arrangement of one room or another is temporarily abandoned, and there are special exhibitions—of examples illustrating the history and methods of engraving, the art of Turner, the old Italian masters, and so forth.

In the department of art, the special interest of the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield is, as in the case of the Ruskin

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on a Museum or Picture Gallery*, § 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 59.

<sup>3</sup> See *Deucalion*, i. ch. viii., and *Letters on a Museum*.

Drawing School at Oxford, partly personal. It is a collection of studies in places that Ruskin loved, buildings that he admired, masters whom he interpreted. The casts and drawings represent Ruskin's labour in collecting, directing, inspiring for many years. He began to collect objects expressly for the Museum in 1876, and he continued to do so till the end of his working days.

"Nominal restoration," he had written in 1849, "has hopelessly destroyed what time, and storm, and anarchy, and impiety had spared. The picturesque material of a lower kind is fast departing. There is not one city scene in central Europe which has not suffered from some jarring point of modernisation."<sup>1</sup> To obtain memorials of the beautiful things that were passing away was one of his chief objects; and for this purpose he gathered around him a band of young and zealous artists, to whose talent he was able to give scope by relieving them of financial cares, and whom he stimulated by encouragement and critical advice. This part of Ruskin's work may be called *The Political Economy of Art* in practice. He "discovered," "applied," "accumulated," "distributed." The reader will remember the four divisions of subject in that book; and in Ruskin's relations with the young artists, as disclosed in the following pages, one sees "the easy and secure employment," the "encouragement in the asphodel meadows of their youth," the setting of them to "various and lasting work"—and then the collection of faithful records, and their distribution in public museums—upon which he had insisted thirty years before. At a still earlier date, in 1855, he had formed an idea of establishing a community of art-workers, who were to carry out under modern conditions the labours of a mediæval *scriptorium*—bound together in some sort of brotherhood, and engaged in copying illuminated manuscripts and making records of old pictures or buildings. The informal brotherhood of artists whom he now gathered round him to work for St. George's Guild was in some sort a fulfilment of his dream.<sup>2</sup> His assistant, Arthur Burgess, had been employed in photographing details of Rouen

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel Prout*, § 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 383.



CHAP. Cathedral, and his collection of negatives is of great value,  
XX. now that so much of the work has suffered by restoration. In obtaining casts of sculptures, then unrestored, at Venice, Ruskin employed conscientious craftsmen, and directed their labours himself. In connexion with "Memorial Studies" of Venice, mentioned in a previous chapter (p. 306), Ruskin appealed in 1879-80 for a special fund, but he received no more than £448, 7s. Among the artists specially employed at Venice was J. W. Bunney, whose principal record was the elaborate painting of the west front of St. Mark's, on which he spent six hundred days' constant labour. His name, wrote Ruskin, "will remain ineffaceably connected with the history of all efforts recently made in Italy for preservation of true record of her national monuments."<sup>1</sup> In the "memorial" work at Venice Ruskin had the earnest sympathy of Burne-Jones, and was fortunate in securing, through his good offices, "an absolutely faithful and able artist, trained by him, to undertake the copying of the mosaics yet uninjured." This artist was Mr. T. M. Rooke, to whom Ruskin sent instructions:—

"(BRANTWOOD, *July* 11.)—Never mind interruptions. They refresh and clarify one's sense, if they spoil one's temper (but they shouldn't). Take them as holidays ordered by the Saints, and enjoy them all you can."

"(BRANTWOOD, *20th July* 1879.)—I am very heartily glad of your letter and its sayings—and its questions—and my time and best thought are entirely at your command, whenever you feel that I might in anything help you. . . . Do not be hampered by any idea of putting the drawings together so as to show united grouping and effect. That must be done by perspective drawings and quite other methods of work. *Your* work is to give the facts point blank of each figure, as fully as you can, caring nothing for junction: yet working often with considerable respect for the picturesque in such point-blank view."

"(13th *Dec.* 1879.)—The real *fact* is that all Byzantine mosaic (and all Eastern colour) has splendour for its first object—and its

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<sup>1</sup> A letter to Mrs. Bunney (August 10, 1883).

type is the peacock's tail. If your drawings glow and melt like that you are right. . . . Please now, also, I must, for the public announcement of our business, know what will make you *comfortable* in payment. You must allow yourself enough for entirely healthy food and lodging and proper service with gondola, and properly emollient fees to sacristans, etc. Fix your day-by-day bread, and you shall have it—duly with the Sun.”

By sad spite of “Fors” the greater part of Mr. Rooke's drawings were destroyed by fire in the Cenis railway. “Ruskin was delighted,” wrote Burne-Jones, “about your burnt drawings. He wasn't put out a bit; all he said was (imitating the Scotch accent), *It's just pure Devil's work.*” Fortunately, the artist had preserved the tracings from which he had made the drawings, and from these he made fresh drawings in 1893, on the suggestion of Mr. White. Some of the original drawings, and several of those thus remade—fifteen in all—are at Sheffield; others are at Oxford.

In the work of obtaining records of beautiful pictures, buildings and scenes in danger of restoration or destruction, Ruskin employed among other artists Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray, Mr. Rooke, Mr. Frank Randal, Signor Angelo Alessandri, and Mr. H. R. Newman. A few letters, selected from a very large number, will show his relations with them:—

(To A. ALESSANDRI.) “BRANTWOOD, 24th April, '81.—MY DEAR ANGELO,—The sight of your writing is always a delight to me: of course the drawing does not come quite so quick as the letter, but I send you ten pounds at once, being *sure* that the drawing will be worth that, and more. I look very eagerly for it, and hope to send you rather praise than ‘critique.’ You criticise *yourself* always too hardly. But I think I can send you at once a little piece of advice which I believe will be in harmony with your own criticism. Did not you feel how much better the second St. Jerome was in colour than the first?—because it was done *easily*, and with reference to colour? I think I may say with reference to all your future study—landscape or figure—Always think of the

CHAP. colour first, and when you've *got* it, *stop*. You *won't* get it but  
 XX. with a sufficient degree of finish and division of parts. As you  
 get experience you will be able to finish farther and farther without  
 losing the colour—but always, the moment you've got all you can  
 of it, *stop*. Your study in *drawing* is to be with the pencil or pen,  
 as you see all the great men studied theirs, and when you take the  
 brush and dip it in a colour, remember always—its *line* is to be as  
 good as care (by the way) and *luck* will make it : but its laid COLOUR  
 IS to be *Right*,—whatever goes wrong to save it. I am very glad  
 you leave Rome before the unhealthy time. In Florence Filippo  
 Lippi, Sandro, Perugino (especially in his fresco—the Nunnery one  
 —and his divine pictures in the Annunciata), are to be pretty nearly  
 your only studies. *Draw* the heads in Sandro's *Spring* as far as  
 you can ! ! ! in grey or brown only. My love and best wishes  
 are always with you. Ever your affectionate Master, JOHN RUSKIN.  
 I'm fairly well again myself—and have hot iron on anvil. Write  
 me some talk about Rome."

Signor Alessandri's first studies for Ruskin had been from Venetian canals and details in Carpaccio's pictures. "The soul of Carpaccio is in you," wrote Ruskin (Dec. 19, 1879), "and with God's help you will do blessed things for Venice. . . . I am ready to take all you can do." From Venice Signor Alessandri went to Rome, to work in the Sistine Chapel, where he made several studies now in the Museum. His "much delighted master" enjoined him (March 22, 1881) to take care of his health and eyes: "never expose yourself to chill, and don't go wandering about by moonlight like the mob."

Similarly Mr. Frank Randal, who was engaged from 1881 to 1886, was kept constantly supplied by Ruskin with instructions, encouragement, and advice. "Don't tire your eyes," "take daily exercise," "don't get chilled in the cathedral," with other pieces of good advice and recommendation of books and reading, constantly occur in Ruskin's letters to the artist, and are pleasantly illustrative of the fatherly relations in which he stood to his young assistants. Mr. Randal, it seems, had chafed (as who has not?) at a wet day among the mountains. Ruskin, who had more interests

than there are hours in the day, gently chides the impatient sketcher :—

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“(BRANTWOOD, *Dec. 27, 1884.*)—Your three drawings are safe here, and are all quite beautiful, and the Arch and Tower most precious to me. You are gaining in power and delicacy as fast as a man can, and have excellent faculty of hand and eye, and patience—and all the world before you—and you grumble at a wet day and don’t know what to do with yourself ! For shame ! What do you think *I* would give to be your age, and able to draw like that ! and to be free at Lecco ! to go where I liked. I will send you any books you like to ask me for, of portable size, and some extra money for boating, etc., and you ought always to have a stone or a flower in hand to be going on with. I’m over-tired and dismal myself to a deadly degree, and could find in my heart to wish you were sixty-five, though I’m always affectly. and gratefully yours,” etc.

Ruskin’s letters to “St. George’s” artists are full of technical instructions. A few examples will show the kind of scenes that he wanted and the effects at which he desired his artists to aim :—

(*To F. RANDAL.*) “BRANTWOOD, *Good Friday, 1881.*—You know, your *practice* is much more to me, just now, than what you are actually doing : but begin on the woodwork of choir [Amiens] in this cold weather, and send me sketches of any of the simpler groups of figures or single figures that strike you—*light*, getting the action and expression without the woody darkness or shine, as like those dogs you did as possible ; and try some bits of the upper crockets and foliage, real sizes, and send me these tries—soon, that I may see how you got on. The foliage must be much more modelled than the figures ; a man can be drawn with dots for eyes and mouth if one’s clever—but a *leaf* *MUST* be undulated or folded as it is. If its real shape is that [sketch] it’s of no use to draw it only like that [sketch] ; nor if really thus [sketch] like [sketch]. And when the weather *is* fine, make any memoranda in the old *streets.*”

(*To the same.*) “BRANTWOOD, *June 22, ’84.*—I never knew two



CHAP. XX. such fellows as you and Angelo for living on Air! Here's some material support for you, that you may get it fresh; on a fine evening, the drive to the great view over Garda will be a lovely rest for you both. If the old frescoes are still traceable in the market place [Verona], let Alessandri make quick memoranda of them straight in front, while you sketch the two great views from each end. There's a wonderful one looking north, with the little foursquare niche made principal—like this [sketch]—and the beautiful arched house on the left; and I want one with Juliet's house on the right, carefully drawn, looking towards the piazza. Oh dear, how much there is! *Don't tire yourselves*—and do *you* try to get into the habit of making scrawl sketches, as above! only just a *little* steadier! Love to Angelo; he's getting to work like Turner! those distances in St. Zeno are wonderful.—Ever affectionately both's,  
J. RUSKIN."

(To T. M. ROOKE.) "Oct. 3, '84.—I want Savoy cottages, distant villages, and any quantity of work, or Byzantine mosaic, of wood, cherry, walnut, and pine, that you can get view of. All that valley to Cluse and the base of the Reposoir beyond Cluse are overwhelmingly lovely in autumn."

In addition to the large collection of copies and studies made by these and other artists for St. George's Guild, Ruskin presented the Museum with very valuable illuminated manuscripts, prints, and precious stones, besides many minerals and coins. Some of the objects were paid for out of "St. George's Fund," to which he was himself the principal contributor, but very many (including the most costly) were his direct gifts. The visitor to the St. George's Museum should remember that the Sheffield collection only represents a part (and in some departments not the more valuable part) of Ruskin's gifts to public institutions; the rest is at Oxford and elsewhere. The collection of records of beautiful places and pictures which he made has never been seen in its entirety by the general public; the exhibition in 1886 was small and not very representative. A Loan Exhibition, drawn from the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford and the St. George's Museum at Sheffield, would be of great interest.

## IV

The Mineralogical department of the Ruskin Museum is no less rich than the artistic. It may be doubted whether any of the minor museums in the country contains such beautiful and costly specimens. "The collection," wrote a mineralogist who reported on this branch of the Museum in 1891, "is a striking testimony to Professor Ruskin's powers of research and keenness of mental vision in the study of natural science. It is far more than a mere aggregate of samples of mineral species; it affords, in fact, illustrations of the structure and of the modes of genesis of stones of all kinds such as could not fail to be of the highest educational value alike to the mineralogist and to the general observer." Like the collection of drawings, it is also a record of Ruskin's tastes and interests, and no less a monument of his generosity. The collection of minerals was gradually formed, and the catalogue, on which Ruskin at various times spent much time, was never completed; it is put together, so far as his proofs and manuscripts serve, in the Library Edition. The varieties of Precious Stones used as gems are especially well represented in the Museum, several of the examples being among the finest known. With few exceptions they remained embedded in the rock in which they had developed. Ruskin's letters to dealers are very numerous; one or two will here suffice to show the kind of points he sought in his specimens:—

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(To BRYCE WRIGHT.) "BRANTWOOD, 9th May, '81.—I hope your box will get safe back to you—that tourmaline is a nasty thing to send about. You will, I regret to say, find all returned except the well crystallised bit of amazon-stone and one of the agates. But I hope you will not be discouraged from sending me things. You OUGHT to know by this time that I *never* buy ores of lead: seldom large detached crystals like the topaz and garnet, that I hate cut stones in *shapes*—and that round eyes can be cut out of agates by the million—if people are fools enough to like them out better than in. I am always open to good silvers—good golds (the one you sent this time was absolutely valueless!)—to

CHAP. anything strange in quartzes (I would have kept the millerite, but  
XX. the specimen was not pretty), to anything fine in chalcedonies—  
and any pretty piece of crystallization in tourmaline—beryl—rutile.  
With these openings you ought to be able to send me a box thrilling  
with interest, once a quarter at least.”

(*To the same.*) “BRANTWOOD, 22nd May, '81.—I am very  
greatly obliged to you for letting me see these opals, quite un-  
exampled, as you rightly say, from that locality—but from that  
locality *I* never buy. My kind is the opal formed in pores and  
cavities, throughout the mass of that compact brown jasper;  
this, which is merely a superficial crust of jelly on the surface of  
a nasty brown sandstone, I do not myself value in the least. I  
wish you could get at some of the geology of the two sorts, but I  
suppose everything is kept close by the diggers and the Jews at  
present. . . . You needn't print this letter as an advertisement,  
unless you like ! ”

The annual reports of the Ruskin Museum issued by the  
Corporation of Sheffield show that, during recent years, the  
average number of visitors *per annum* is 45,000; and of  
students, 600. The Lecture Room is well filled when the  
Curator discourses on various branches of art or science  
illustrated in the Museum. The Curator also expounds the  
objects in the Museum on the occasion of regular visits paid  
by children from the elementary schools under the regula-  
tions of the Board of Education. The Ruskin Societies in  
Manchester and Liverpool and other large cities visit it, and  
it is a meeting-place for the “circles” of a vigorous Ruskin  
Club in Sheffield itself. The fame of the Ruskin Museum  
has spread to other lands, and the present Curator was  
recently invited to lecture upon it (in connexion with a  
People's Museum to be established at Berlin) at a Museums  
Conference held in Mannheim; an illustrated report on the  
Ruskin Museum was published in Berlin at the same time.  
It is pleasant to know that the collection upon which  
Ruskin spent so much of his time and money is well cared  
for and widely appreciated, and that the Museum, from  
which he hoped great things, is thus a centre of many useful  
activities.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SCHOOLS OF ST. GEORGE

“ You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not, but by making him what he was not.”—*Munera Pulveris*.

THERE were no Schools of St. George. Ruskin intended, as we have seen, that the labourers on all lands of the Guild of St. George should be provided “with every proper means of mental instruction.” Every community under St. George’s banner was to have its school, its library, its collection of examples of art, organised and selected by “the Master.”<sup>1</sup> It is a pity that no such school was actually started, for it would have been an interesting experiment; though it may be doubted whether Ruskin would have found co-operation with Whitehall very easy. But as there were no St. George’s Settlements on a scale large enough to require a separate school, there were also no St. George’s Schools. They existed only in Ruskin’s imagination; but a large portion of *Fors Clavigera* was devoted to the subject of education. He wrote or edited school-books; he collected school-examples; he instituted school-festivals. In the present chapter a connected account is given of his work in this sort. There is perhaps no subject on which Ruskin threw out so many luminous and suggestive ideas; nor any field in which his teaching has been more fruitful.

In all his political writing, Ruskin insisted upon the individual character as the key of the position; and hence a discussion of the theory and practice of education was an essential part of *Fors Clavigera* as an essay in social reconstruction. Not, indeed, that he claimed any originality here, or elsewhere; his only ambition was to recall to modern minds, and apply to modern conditions, the ancient

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 335.



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wisdom of Plato and Xenophon; if he had read the works of great educational reformers, such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, or Thring, he would have rejoiced to find many of his own suggestions anticipated or repeated by them; and so, too, it is interesting to note how often passages in Ruskin's writings forestall or unwittingly repeat the Reports of Matthew Arnold. Ruskin wrote not as a specialist, and seldom used technical terms; his thoughts on education, though most abundant in *Fors Clavigera*, are scattered in many of his earlier books; they form part of the texture of his work, and as such one cannot doubt that their influence has extended into circles untouched by technical treatises and Reports to "My Lords."

## I

What, then, according to Ruskin is *the aim and scope of education*? Education, he says, is an ethical, rather than an intellectual, process. "Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave."<sup>1</sup> "The great leading error of modern times is the mistaking erudition for education. Millions of peasants are at this moment better educated than most of those who call themselves gentlemen."<sup>2</sup> It follows from this text that education is not to be estimated by mere acquisition of knowledge; and that *competitive examination* (for this and other reasons) is to be discouraged. Any stimulus given to "envious or anxious effort" is inimical to the true ends of education. Ruskin's emphatic and repeated enunciation of these principles was a protest against the system of "payment by results" in the three R's—a system which of late years has for the most part been abolished in the Education Codes. The doom of the old theory and the vindication of Ruskin's protests were pronounced (so far as official regulation goes) when, in introducing the Education Budget of 1893, Mr. Acland discarded Mr. Lowe's views on education as "far too mechanical and inflexible," and said "our object is to consider not merely

<sup>1</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 144.<sup>2</sup> *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii., App. 7.

what the children know when they leave, but what they are, and what they are to do; bearing in mind that the great object is not merely knowledge, but character.”<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin was led by these same principles to the paradox of opposing *the three R's*. His scholars, he said, were to be educated “not at all necessarily, in either arithmetic, writing, or reading.”<sup>2</sup> Probably there are many people who know no more about Ruskin's views on education than this sentence. The newspapers, more ready to amuse than to instruct their readers, fastened on it and made fun of the fact that, though “the workmen and labourers of Great Britain” were not to learn to read, they were expected to know Latin. At the time when he began to write *Fors* the three R's were the total of education sanctioned and paid for by the State. What Ruskin sought to show was that there are other things more important, and that, if one branch of education or the other had to be omitted, he would in many cases prefer to see the three R's omitted. The true “compulsory education,” he wrote in 1869, “is not teaching the youths of England the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers, and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery and their literature to lust. It is, on the contrary, training them into the perfect exercise and kingly continence of their bodies and souls.”<sup>3</sup> What Ruskin sought to guard against was teaching children to read and then leaving them without guidance as to what and how to read. The perception of this danger has led to such movements as that of the “National Home Reading Union”; and it explains the importance which Ruskin attached in his *Utopia* to lists of selected books.<sup>4</sup>

From the proposition that education is to be an ethical proeess, another conelusion follows; namely, that *true education is not directed to “success in life.”* “You do not learn that you may live, you live that you may learn.” The true education “is, in itself, advancement in Life. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, 4th Series, vol. 15, p. 899.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors*, Letter 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 144.

<sup>4</sup> Letters 57 and 58.

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He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into Living Peace.”<sup>1</sup> To like effect, Pestalozzi: “The ultimate end of education is, not perfection in the accomplishments of the school, but fitness for life”;<sup>2</sup> and Lord Goschen, “Education is a means not of livelihood, but of life.”<sup>3</sup>

How, then, is Education to fit us for life? “True education has respect, first, to the ends which are proposable to the man, or attainable by him; and, secondly, to the material of which the man is made. So far as it is able, it chooses the end according to the material . . . but the material is as various as the ends; every man is essentially different from every other.”<sup>4</sup> Hence there can be no such thing as a general education equally applicable to everybody. *Education should be regulated by natural endowment.* True justice in education “consists in the granting to every human being due aid in the development of such faculties as he possesses for action and enjoyment.”<sup>5</sup> This is the idea which underlies much of Ruskin’s chapter on “Discovery” in *The Political Economy of Art*, and his suggestion of “trial schools.” Education can discover; it cannot create. The gold is a fixed quantity; “the best you can do with it is always merely sifting, melting, hammering, purifying—never creating.” This is a principle on which Ruskin strongly insists in *Fors.* “The idea,” he says, “of a general education which is to fit everybody to be Emperor of Russia . . . is the most entirely and directly diabolic of all the countless stupidities into which the British nation has been of late betrayed.”<sup>6</sup> Yet there are some common elements in all education. Our education is to fit us for life; and the life of man consists of Work and Worship. First, then, *education must be directed to practical work.* “The first condition of

<sup>1</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 145, and *Sesame and Lilies*, §§ 2, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Ruskin on Education*, by W. Jolly, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Cultivation of the Imagination*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii., Appendix 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Fors*, Letter 9.

<sup>6</sup> Letter 95.

education is being put to wholesome and useful work." "You don't know how to make a brick, a tile, or a pot; or how to build a dyke, or drive a stake that will stand. No more do I. Our education has to begin."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin meant all this very seriously. In his scheme of education not only would every child of the working classes be taught a trade, but the children of every class would be disciplined in some form of manual labour. This is one of the points at which his educational theories touch most closely his social; for his ideas, which often seem to casual readers paradoxical and disconnected, were in fact closely interwoven. But apart from schemes of social reconstruction, he held profoundly to the gospel of manual labour as a branch of education, both physical and mental—physical as conducing to health and strength, mental as bringing children into touch with realities and correcting the one-sidedness of verbal training. Hence his insistence upon the desirability of giving to physical exercises a useful, and not only a gymnastic, character. How Ruskin endeavoured to set in practice at Oxford what he preached, we have already seen in an earlier chapter,<sup>2</sup> where also reference has been made to some application of his principle in modern experiments in education. Ruskin had social aims in view, as well as educational; but, on the educational side, the importance which he attached to manual labour is in accord with the precepts of all great educational reformers.<sup>3</sup>

In connexion partly with the importance which he thus attached to manual training, and partly in order to facilitate nature-lessons, he lays it down that every parish school should have "garden and cultivable land, spacious enough to employ the scholars in fine weather mostly out of doors."<sup>4</sup> In this point, as in many others, he was but a little in front of his time. In the existing Code, local education authorities are empowered to provide *school-gardens*; and there is much in the "Memorandum on Courses

<sup>1</sup> Letters 2, 47, and 64.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> See Jolly's *Ruskin on Education*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Fors*, Letter 94.



CHAP. XXI. of Work in Rural Evening Schools" (July 1906)<sup>1</sup> which reads like a practical commentary upon Ruskin's Letters of a quarter of a century ago. The Board of Education dwells upon the importance of "definite training in manual operations"; points to the desirability of "farm schools, agricultural colleges, and courses in agriculture and horticulture"; advises "instruction in 'How to manage a garden'"; and commends "the increasing care which is being taken to connect the work of the public elementary schools with the surroundings of the scholars."

Next, *education must be consciously directed to developing the faculties of Worship*, in the widest sense of that term. "We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love." Ruskin took Wordsworth's line for "literal guide in all education." Admiration, hope, and love are the three immaterial things which are essential to Life; and no day's schooling is complete which has not done something to develop a child's capacity for these things. The lines on which the education of children should proceed in this direction must depend on their several endowments; but *the elementary virtues should be a common element in all education*. "Habits of gentleness and justice," no less than "the calling by which he is to live," are to be taught to every child.<sup>2</sup> Ruskin was a firm believer in Carlyle's "Gospel of Soap and Water."<sup>3</sup> Moral education, he says, "begins in making the creature to be educated, clean"; and next, "obedient." "Religion means obedience." And these two virtues must be taught "thoroughly, and at any cost, and with any kind of compulsion rendered necessary by the nature of the animal."<sup>4</sup> The education which should be compulsory means, he says elsewhere, "teaching children to be clean, active, honest, and useful."<sup>5</sup> Let us hope that the words in the Code of 1894, which echo Ruskin's injunctions, bear full

<sup>1</sup> "Evening" schools, it should be understood, is a technical term in official phraseology; the Government grants are equally applicable to "evening schools" which meet in the day-time.

<sup>2</sup> *Unto this Last*, Preface.

<sup>3</sup> *Friedrich*, book xiii. ch. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> *Fors*, Letters 37 and 45.

<sup>5</sup> See Library Ed., vol. xxxiv. p. 496.

fruit in the actual education of British children. "The managers and teachers will be expected to satisfy the Inspector that all reasonable care is taken to bring up the children in the habits of punctuality, of good manners and language, of cleanliness and neatness, and also to impress upon the children the importance of cheerful obedience to duty, of consideration and respect for others, and of honour and truthfulness in word and act." Other virtues which Ruskin desired to see made the subject of education were kindness and humility. He dwells especially on the importance of teaching "gentleness to all brute creatures";<sup>1</sup> and he took much interest in the child-society of "Friends to Living Creatures."<sup>2</sup> The teaching of Humility is the subject of some detailed notice in Letter 94 of *Fors*, which many schoolmasters and schoolmistresses would do well to read, mark, and learn.

How are "admiration, hope, and love" to be taught? "By the study of beautiful Nature; the sight and history of noble persons; and the setting forth of noble objects of action."<sup>3</sup> The words that I have italicised bring us to a very interesting point on which Ruskin is at one with the great educational writers of all ages. He agreed with Wordsworth's counsel, "Let Nature be your teacher." "My own belief is," he says, "that the best study of all is the most beautiful; and that a quiet glade of forest, or the nook of a lake shore, are worth all the schools in Christendom, when once you are past the multiplication table."<sup>4</sup> Hence the destruction of beautiful scenery was to Ruskin the destruction of the best means of education.<sup>5</sup> But, even if the conditions be favourable, the study of beautiful Nature cannot be wholly passive. To the *teaching of natural science* in elementary education, Ruskin devotes many pages in *Fors*—ridiculing the kind of information which to him seemed uneducational (that is, unsuitable in any scheme of general or elementary education), and, by way of sample lessons, indicating the kind of things which he would

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 8.<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 509.<sup>3</sup> Letter 67.<sup>4</sup> *A Joy for Ever*, § 105.<sup>5</sup> *Sesame and Lilies*, §§ 82-85.

CHAP. XXI. teach.<sup>1</sup> His three books on natural history—*Love's Meinie*, *Proserpina*, and *Deucalion*--were, as he explains, intended for "school grammars."<sup>2</sup>

The study of nature was to Ruskin, it need not be said, the study of art; and thus we come next to his discussion of *æsthetic teaching*. He was at one with all the great educationalists in emphasising the cultivation of taste as a principal element in education. "We shall not succeed," he says, "in making a peasant's opinion good evidence on the merits of the Elgin marbles; yet I believe we may make art a means of giving him helpful and happy pleasure, and of gaining for him serviceable knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Like Plato, he trusted much to the unconscious education of a child's surroundings.<sup>4</sup> He protested against "cheap furniture and bare walls" in the school-room; he preached—at a time (1857) when the lesson was still little learnt—the need for some architectural decoration in school buildings, and showed the use of pictures, especially historical paintings, in the class-rooms.<sup>5</sup> And so in *Fors*, Schools "are to be externally of a majestic character," and internally to be hung with works of art.<sup>6</sup> "The notion of fixing the attention by keeping the room empty is a wholly mistaken one."<sup>7</sup> Here, again, Ruskin's pleadings were presently to receive official sanction. In 1894 a deputation, organised by Mr. T. C. Horsfall, waited upon Mr. Acland, then the Minister of Education, asking, among other things, that visits to museums, historical buildings, and botanical gardens should be admitted into the school curriculum. Mr. Acland, in reply, "spoke of the need of making school bright and attractive, and of teaching children to appreciate beautiful things. He would like to see school walls filled with reproductions of friezes and pictures, which would be an education in form and colour; he heartily held the idea of William Morris, that, no more than education, than liberty itself, should art be for the few; and he pledged himself to carry out the wishes

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Letters 51 and 52, and below, pp. 410, 419.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors*, Letter 67.

<sup>3</sup> *A Joy for Ever*, § 154.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> *A Joy for Ever*, §§ 104–107.

<sup>6</sup> Letters 7 and 79.

<sup>7</sup> *A Joy for Ever*, § 127.

of the deputation in the New Code" (of 1894).<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's personal influence may be traced in such efforts as those of the Kyrle Society, founded in 1877 by his friend and pupil, Miss Octavia Hill and her sister; and in the Art for Schools Association, which has done so much admirable work in producing and circulating prints for use in schools. He was the President of this Association, founded in 1883 by the late Miss Mary Christie.

Ruskin attached, however, more importance to *music and dancing* than to pictorial art as instruments of æsthetic training. "Music and Dancing! They are quite the two primal instruments of education. . . . In St. George's schools, reading, writing, and accounts may be spared where pupils show no turn to any of these scholarships, but music and dancing, never."<sup>2</sup> Music, in Ruskin's scheme, meant also *poetry*, for by music he meant principally song, and he recognised no songs as educationally fit which are not wedded to fine words. He lays great stress in *Fors* upon the importance both of the selection of fine models, and of exercise in learning by heart. Listening to good reading and learning poetry by heart were to be an essential part of education.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note how closely Ruskin's advice here follows that which Matthew Arnold used to press upon "My Lords" in his official Reports. The remedy for the failure to instil taste and general culture will be found to lie, says Arnold, "not in attempting to teach the rules of taste directly—a lesson which we shall never get learnt—but in introducing a lesson which we can get learnt, which has a value in itself whether it leads to something more or not, and which, in happy natures, will probably lead to this something more. The learning by heart extracts from good authors is such a lesson."<sup>4</sup> Ruskin gives an instance of such a happy nature in *Fors*, where he describes the death of a little boy who passed away singing the bits of hymns he had learnt at the Sunday-school—

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Education*, June 1894, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors*, Letter 57.

<sup>3</sup> Letters 94 and 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Reports on Elementary Schools, 1852-1882*, p. 94.



CHAP. "so much of his education finally available to him, you  
XXI. observe." <sup>1</sup>

Among practical hints on various subjects, Ruskin had much to say about *maps*. His own education in drawing had begun with them,<sup>2</sup> and in old age he used to amuse himself with colouring them.<sup>3</sup> The ordinary modern map was an abomination to him. It was too full and yet too empty. It gave the names of places of no importance, yet it disguised or perverted all the physical features of a country. There were two ways in which he thought that maps should be made more useful for educational purposes. He desired to see good physical atlases founded on models,<sup>4</sup> and historical atlases in which graphic symbols might be used. It appears that Ruskin put himself into communication with map-makers on the subject, for in a letter to Mr. Allen (November 19, 1879) he speaks of one of them seeming "likely to take up my map plans." He liked the quaint productions of ancient cartographers, of which he had a collection, such as showed "the camels of the Tartar who dwells on the plains of Thibet"; or the Russian peasants along the banks of the Volga. He engraved in the *Bible of Amiens* a diagrammatic history of France—first giving only the mountain ranges and courses of the great rivers, and then, in successive series, showing by means of roses, lilies, and other symbols, the main courses of historical development.

Another subject to which Ruskin devoted much attention was the *teaching of music*. In the importance which he attached to music in education he was a loyal follower of Plato. He accepts his master's estimate of music as the prime element in moral education. But, like Plato, Ruskin felt that just as music, rightly followed, might be the noblest, so, corrupted, it might be the most dissolute, of influences. For good or for evil, the influence must always be great; but we do not always recognise "how much music, from the nurse's song to the military band and the lover's ballad, does really modify existing civilized life." The purpose of

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 94.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> *The Black Arts* (1887).

<sup>4</sup> Letter 65.

noble music is, in Ruskin's definition, "to say a thing that you mean deeply, in the strongest and clearest possible way." It is in music thus understood that Ruskin believed as an instrument of education, and of such music that he was thinking when he said, at the outset of *Fors*, "we will have music and poetry; the children shall learn to dance to it and sing it."<sup>1</sup> To three points, besides the selection of music with meaning in it, he attached chief importance. The voice was always to be principal; choral association was essential; and beautiful words were always to be wedded to the song. He records in *Fors* some experiments he made in the Coniston village school, laying stress on bell-ringing;<sup>2</sup> very rightly, for in many villages this is the favourite, if not the only, form of musical exercise.

Ruskin insisted also on the importance of *teaching in social and political economy*. His theory of education is advocated as that which is best calculated to develop the capacities of the individual, but it is also adjusted to the requirements of individuals co-operating in a social organism. "Moral education consists," he says, "in making the creature practically serviceable to other creatures, according to the nature and extent of his own capacities; taking care that it be healthily developed in such service."<sup>3</sup> "Men's proper business in this world," says Ruskin, is "to know themselves and the existing state of things they have to do with; to be happy in themselves, and in the existing state of things; to mend themselves and the existing state of things, as far as either are marred or mendable."<sup>4</sup> Hence comes Ruskin's protest against the too rhetorical turn given to University education;<sup>5</sup> and hence his plea for the admission into all school curricula of "politics," by which he means "the science of the relations and duties of men to each other."<sup>6</sup> The protest and the plea are among the most deeply felt, and therefore the most eloquent, passages

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letters 9 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 95.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 67.

<sup>4</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch.

<sup>5</sup> In Appendix 3 to *Modern Painters*, vol. iv.

<sup>6</sup> In Appendix 7 to *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii.

CHAP. in his Works. Thirty or forty years after he thus wrote,  
 XXI. official recognition was given to his ideas in the Code—again the work of a son of the first Trustee of St. George's Guild, Mr. Arthur Acland—which included courses in the Life and Duties of the Citizen in the grant-earning programme of Evening Continuation Schools.<sup>1</sup>

## II

Such in brief outline were Ruskin's leading ideas about education. During later years at Brantwood he became a school manager, taking his duties seriously, as memoranda among his papers show, and he was a frequent visitor to the village school:—

“At these times he would enter into pleasant conversation with the scholars, asking them all sorts of unexpected questions on a variety of subjects. He clothed the wall of the schoolroom with facsimile drawings, after Prout, Nash, and others, of famous specimens of architecture; these are still to be seen there. In the schoolyard may also be seen the remains of a large orrery—showing inside its circumference the principal constellations of the heavens—which at considerable expense he caused to be constructed for astronomical instruction. On making his way into the infants' department he would pick up any of the tiny scholars whom he found to be in trouble, and entering into their childish woes with the utmost tenderness, generally succeeded by some means or other in restoring the smiles to their faces.”<sup>2</sup>

Ruskin made some attempt to illustrate his educational ideas by a series of books, which he entitled *Bibliotheca Pastorum*. “A republication of classical authors in standard forms” had “long been a main object” with him. In his

<sup>1</sup> *Code of Regulations for Evening Continuation Schools*, 1894. It is interesting to notice that in the detailed scheme suggested for the course, Ruskin's phrase “tools to the man who can use them” is quoted (p. 16).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from a local newspaper in “John Ruskin as Girls knew Him,” by D. Susie Collingwood in *The Girls' Realm*, April 1900. For an example of his talk with the children, see *Fors*, Letter 94.

lecture "Of Kings' Treasuries" (1864), he had spoken of "a royal series of chosen books" as a dream of the future. Ten years later, in Letter 37 of *Fors*, he described how, in his community of St. George, "every household would have its library," which was partly to be the same in each home, consisting of a selection of classical authors. In January 1876 he was able to announce that a beginning was then in hand; and the first volume of his *Peasants' Library* was issued in July of that year.

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Ruskin's conception of the importance of education in what is now called "civics" is shown by his making a translation of Xenophon's *Economist* the first volume in his *Bibliotheca Pastorum*. It had long been a favourite book with him. It was indeed the foundation on which he built much of his studies in Political Economy.<sup>1</sup> The first law of creation, he says, is "that by the sweat of the brow we shall eat bread." Therefore, "the economy of the field is the first science," and this is stated by Xenophon "in terms that cannot be mended." Xenophon's book contains also "a faultless definition of wealth"; "the most perfect ideal of kingly character and kingly government"; and "the ideal of domestic life."

"It was at one of his breakfasts to his 'diggers' and other undergraduates in the spring of 1875," writes Mr. Wedderburn, "that Ruskin said he wanted the translation done. Leonard Montefiore and I, both then at Balliol, volunteered, and started the work; but Montefiore, who was not a 'classical' scholar, decided to give it up, and proposed Collingwood, who was at University, to me as collaborateur. In the Long Vacation of 1875 I joined Collingwood at a cottage he then had on Windermere, and there we completed our first draft of the translation. We then went over to Brantwood and revised the translation with Ruskin, reading it out to him, and he following our translation with the Greek." The Preface contributed by Ruskin to the book is among the most elaborate and characteristic of his shorter pieces. "I'm just doing a most careful Preface to Xenophon," he wrote to Professor Norton (Oxford, March 1,

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 41.



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1876)—“mapping Greek colonies and religion all over Europe, and am giddy with the lot of things that focus, now, out of past work.” The rapid generalisations which he thus mapped out, if suggestive, are perhaps not always firmly grounded; he submitted them, for the most part, as suggestions only, and suggestive they certainly are.

The second volume in *Bibliotheca Pastorum* was a selection, with notes and commentary, from the metrical paraphrases of the Psalter by Sir Philip Sidney and his sister. Ruskin's edition of the Psalter, which he entitled *Rock Honeycomb*,<sup>1</sup> was prepared by himself, and was issued in June 1877. His study of the Psalms had begun in his early childhood, and he pursued it throughout his life—not, indeed, critically or historically, but for edification. “The Psalter alone,” he says, “which practically was the service book of the Church for many ages, contains merely in the first half of it the sum of personal and social wisdom.”<sup>2</sup> His interest in Sidney—which appears in several of the early letters of *Fors Clavigera*—had perhaps been quickened at Brantwood by local tradition.<sup>3</sup> The familiarity of the Bible and Prayer-book versions deadens the reader's perception. The novelty of Sidney's version, with its forthright directness, would, Ruskin hoped, stir the heart and quicken the conscience. But, in the second place, he saw in the Sidney Psalter excellent material for a song-book to be used in “St. George's schools.” Sidney's paraphrases readily sing themselves. Just as Ruskin objected to nonsense exercises in drawing—just as he wanted to combine lessons in outline with lessons in botany or heraldry, so in the case of songs he desired that children should learn concurrently something both of music and of literature by the study of accurate words set to tune. “All perfectly rhythmic poetry is meant to be sung to music,” and “all entirely noble music is the illustration of noble words.” It was possibility of this conjunction that he found in the Sidney Psalter.

<sup>1</sup> “With honey out of the rock  
I have satisfied thee” (Psalm  
lxxxi. 16).

<sup>2</sup> *Bible of Amiens*, ch. iii. § 50.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 280.

The consideration of the metres employed in the Sidney Psalter led Ruskin to take up the subject of English Prosody. He seems to have begun his essay at the time when he was editing the Psalter; for in that earlier work he mentions his "little introduction to English prosody" as nearly ready, though it was not issued till October 1880. "I have never hitherto printed any book," he says, "falling so short of what I hoped to make it as this sketch of the system of English prosody." The subject is intricate to the last degree, and Ruskin left its full treatment to "better scholars." What he has to say is, however, full of interest; especially as a study, by a master of English, in the way in which poems in various metres should, to his ear, be read. Many of his suggestions will probably not commend themselves to students of English prosody, but his essay has the root of the matter in it. "The acute intellect of Ruskin," says one of the leading authorities on the subject,<sup>1</sup> "fastened at once on essentials. He saw that metre and music were akin; that the former, too, contains 'measured rests, filling up the time required, as in bars of music'; that the primal essence of a poet is in his being a singer, actually and not metaphorically. He recognises that usually it must 'depend on the reader's choice to fill up the time with his voice, or to give an interval of silence.'" But when he begins applying these principles, he encounters many difficulties; his laws are arbitrary, and he has to fall back upon the doctrine that the most beautiful verse violates them. "Technically," continues Mr. Omond, "I should say that Ruskin more often goes wrong than right; what redeems his tract is its emotional receptivity. He *felt* the cadence of particular lines, felt it deeply and truly, and tried by artifice and caprice to translate his feelings into prosodic theory."

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Omond: *English Metrists in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, being a Sketch of English Prosodical Criticism during the last two hundred years*, p. 175. "Ruskin's

treatise," says Professor Saintsbury (*History of English Prosody*, vol. iii. p. 450), has "the saving grace of love."

## III

CHAP.  
XXI.

The use of musical notation for prosody, which Ruskin adopts, is now commonly followed; he had been anticipated in it, though he was not aware of the fact, by Dr. J. H. H. Schmidt.<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, in his Preface, expresses the hope that his harmonic friends would construct or choose for him passages of music to fit the verses, note to syllable; and as they failed him, he put a few chords to some simple measures, "merely to show what he wanted." Similarly, in the Preface to *Rock Honeycomb* he insists that "songs should be sung to their accompaniment, straight forward," a rule which is generally accepted in these days, when accompaniments are, as the Germans say, *durch-componirt*. Ruskin's writing shows a fine sense for rhythm; but it is not generally known that throughout his life he was a student of music, and it was to these lessons, perhaps, that he owed the mastery of voice which he showed in the lecture-room. The singing lessons, which he began at Oxford, were continued at intervals even up to old age.<sup>2</sup> His music-master for many years was George Frederic West, who taught him something of composition; but, reports Mr. Collingwood, he "was a most difficult pupil, wanting at every turn to know why; incredulous of the best authority; impatient of the compromises and conventions, the 'wohltemperirtes Klavier'; and eager to upset everything and start afresh."<sup>3</sup> "But you wouldn't be ungrammatical, Dr. Ruskin?" was the despairing appeal of Mr. West (who always so styled his pupil). He was fond of transposing songs. He was a regular concert-goer, and he used to like staying at the Queen's Hotel at Norwood, "to be near the Manns concerts." On arriving at Paris or any great foreign town, his first question was always, "What about the opera?" John Hullah was one of his friends. He delighted in the singing of "Claribel" (Mrs. Barnard), whose acquaintance he had made at Miss Ingelow's, and the

<sup>1</sup> In that writer's *Leitfaden in der Rhythmik und Metrik*, 1869. An English translation appeared in 1879.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ruskin Relics*, p. 154.

pleasure which Mrs. Severn's singing gave him is told in the chapter of *Præterita* called "Joanna's Care." His friend, Mr. Collingwood, was dear to him, he says playfully in *Præterita*, "because he could sing French songs about the Earthly Paradise." Old English, French, and Scottish songs were his great delight, though some he rejected. "Of 'Charmante Gabrielle' he said once, 'It might do when a king sang it.'" Haydn, Mozart, Handel, Bach, and Corelli were among his favourite composers. Mendelssohn, as readers of his books know, he detested. Wagner, as we shall hear, he could not taste. His books abound in incidental references to music;<sup>1</sup> though, here, as at so many other points, what he said was but a small part of what he had it in his mind to say. "It will never be known," he wrote in one of his latest pieces,<sup>2</sup> "either from my works or my biographies, how much thought I have given to music, in the abstract forms of melody which correspond to the beauty of clouds and mountains."

It was from about the year 1880 onwards—the year, that is, in which he sent the *Elements of Prosody* to press—that Ruskin took to amusing himself with little compositions of his own, essays not without merit, as some who are acquainted with his "At Marmion's Grave" have thought. For the most part, his tunes were for rhymes of his own making or for favourite bits from Scott and Shakespeare. Thus, in *Rock Honeycomb*, he stated how "Come unto these yellow sands" should not be set to music; to illustrate his ideas of how it should be, he composed a setting of his own. He wrote tunes also for two of his favourite Odes of Horace—"Faune, Nympharum" and "Tu ne quæsieris." The former is printed in the Library Edition with a few other pieces—"At Marmion's Grave," "On old Ægina's Rock," "Trust thou thy love," and a little Note of Welcome. The Welcome is an illustration of Ruskin's pretty domesticities; whenever Mrs. Severn returned after an absence from Brantwood he would sit down at the piano and sing his little rhyme of home-coming. His efforts at musical

<sup>1</sup> Collected by Miss Wakefield  
in *Ruskin on Music*.

<sup>2</sup> *Christ's Folk*, "Addio, Cara!"  
(1887).



CHAP. composition are very slight, and not free from technical  
XXI. solecisms. They are chiefly of interest, perhaps, as affording an addition to the instances which biographies contain of men of genius who, excelling in one art, have sought unsuccessfully to attain mastery in some other.

## IV

A third volume of *Bibliotheca Pastorum* was to have been a further instalment of Sidney's Psalter. To the fourth volume, *A Knight's Faith*, reference is made in a later chapter (XXVIII.). No other volumes of *Bibliotheca Pastorum* were issued; but connected with it were various studies of Peasant Life which he edited (Chap. XXIX.). A school book which he planned and partly wrote was the "Grammar of Art," commenced in *The Laws of Fésolé*, in which the plates are lettered "Schools of St. George." He also, in one of his Reports to the Guild, connects the projected *Our Fathers have Told Us* with this school work, as an elementary History book. His republication of *Dame Wiggins of Lee*, with some additional verses by himself and drawings by Kate Greenaway, was intended to provide little Agnes of the shepherd's cottage with a nursery rhyme "more rhythmical, and therefore," as he characteristically adds, "more moral," than those of current popular literature.<sup>1</sup> As a beginning of artistic treasure for St. George's Schools and Cottages, he selected and placed on sale a series of "Lesson Photographs"—of a bas-relief in the Villa Albani at Rome, which Ruskin named "The Etruscan Leucothea," of Lippi's "Madonna and Child, with St. John" in the Uffizi, of Titian's "Madonna with the Cherries" (Vienna), and of Velazquez's "Infanta Margarita" (Vienna). Selected copies of these photographs were signed by Ruskin, and are treasured by faithful Ruskinians; but unfortunately they were not printed by permanent process. They are permanently reproduced in the Library Edition, though on a smaller scale.

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 50.

An educational experiment made by Ruskin remains to be noticed. His conception of a school included the idea of graceful mirth and excluded that of prize competitions. He hit upon an original plan for combining these ideas in his system of "May Queens." The queen was to be chosen for her virtues, and she in turn was to select Maids of Honour for theirs, and all were to be rewarded by gifts, the ceremony of coronation being the occasion for revels. Ruskin had organised a May Queen Festival many years before, in the school for which *The Ethics of the Dust* was written. Through *Fors Clavigera* he made the acquaintance of the Rev. J. P. Faunthorpe, Principal of the Whitelands Training College for Girls at Chelsea; and it was here that the May Queen Festival became an established institution. Accounts of this annual celebration—with its pretty floral accompaniments, the girl's frocks designed by Miss Greenaway, the gold cross designed by Burne-Jones or Mr. Severn, and given each year by Ruskin, the election of the Queen, the presentation of Ruskin's books—were published in the newspapers, and the celebration was soon transplanted elsewhere. Miss Martin, formerly a governess at Whitelands and afterwards Principal of the High School for Girls at Cork, had chanced to say to Ruskin that Irish girls were as deserving of his affection as English ones. The remark touched his heart more nearly than she knew, and he gladly established a similar festival at Cork, the queen in this case being for reasons that may be guessed a Rose Queen. As a gift to the "Queen," Ruskin presented for many years a gold brooch of wild roses; and, as at Whitelands, he sent copies of his books for her to present to her chosen maidens. His portrait, in stained glass, hangs in a window of the school-hall; it was one of the first pieces of such work executed at Youghal. Many of the "Queens" trained at Whitelands College have introduced Ruskin's May Day Festival into schools of their own, and the festival has been acclimatised also in Canada. To the schools at Whitelands and Cork Ruskin presented collections of minerals; and to the former he presented also a cabinet of drawings and engravings, and for this he

CHAP. wrote a catalogue. His letters to the "Queens" show the  
XXI. trouble he took to interest and influence the girls:—

(*To a May Queen.*) "BRANTWOOD, Nov. 24, '81.—MY DEAR QUEEN,—It's very nice getting these pretty letters of thanks with a little love at the end of each, which one can save up and keep, and it will make ever so much in time, won't it? I've been looking through my books to find some more that would be nice for White-lands, partly to get another letter! and partly because I'm ashamed to have pretty books and never use them, and practically I find that nearly all my books now get mildewed on my shelves for want of use. I hope one that I'm sending is pretty safe, for it has always been near to me, that's near the fire too, in my study—the Hungarian Noble's book on the wild plants of Hungary. It is done like a gentleman; and there is a certain old Dresden china look about its cover which one doesn't get nowadays! . . ."

(*To a Rose Queen.*) "BRANTWOOD, May 6, '85.—MY DEAR ROSE QUEEN,—I rejoiced in your writing to me, and in all I was told of your pleasure, and of the general pleasure, in your May-day of consecration—I use that word rather than coronation. It would be well if all Kings and Queens were taught that coronation is a mockery without that nobler adjunct. . . . You write to me that you have been fortunate and happy in being chosen. Yes, you are so—in having to such degree gained the affections of your companions. You would not have been vain enough to think, unless I had put it in your head, that they should be fortunate in having you for their Queen? But if through all the year you make it your chief purpose to think of the little things that might please them, and to be yourself, without affectation and in sincerity and simplicity, a Queen fulfilling the political maxim in all truth, 'The Queen can do no wrong,' may not your coronation be the beginning of perhaps the very best and happiest part of their education and yours? I am going to ask Miss Martin—who I do not doubt feels with me in these things, as I know our principal does—to invest you with as much of her own authority as she thinks you can wisely use, and I hope your companions will be happy in the concession to you of a right of a final decision in things among themselves debatable. And if perhaps you would let me—I was going to say, be grand vizier, but St. George would not like the Turkish

title, and as he detests all Parliamentary Governments, would still less allow one to be Prime Minister, will you consult St. Patrick on the matter and appoint me, as he may judge best, to some position about Court, where I might be permitted to share in your Majesty's counsels? I believe that with St. Patrick's and St. George's blessing many little queenly acts of grace might be devised, which will be remembered in history, and happy more and more in their carrying on by some future reigning sovereigns. And wherever you place me, or how far you may or may not honour me with participation in your benevolent and prudent measures undertaken for the common good, believe me, my dear Queen, ever your Majesty's loyal and loving servant."

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He had the gift of sympathy, and, as these "Queens" went out into the world, his influence must have extended in many a circle. To the students of Whitelands College collectively he wrote in 1885:—

"BRANTWOOD, *December 1st.*—MY DEAR STUDENTS,—Fellow-students, let me say, and feel, in all that it is well to seek and sweet to know. I am most thankful for your letter to-day; not that I have ever been unthankful for any letter of the kind, but I had little hope a few weeks since of ever seeing merry Christmas with you again, and I have never looked forward to a Christmas so happy as now to this that is yet granted me. You say you will never be all together again. Think, rather, that you will never be separated, but in all places and through all conditions of men extending the hopeful power of your happy sisterhood. Ever your grateful and affectionate."

Ruskin may well be remembered among those who both by the printed word and by personal intercourse have done much to teach the teachers of our time. As such his name was appropriately given by the London School Board to a school built near his early home.<sup>1</sup> A "Ruskin College" at Oxford and a "Ruskin Hall" at Birkenhead further link the name of the Master of St. George's Guild with various schemes for the better education of the people.

<sup>1</sup> The "John Ruskin School" is in Beresford Street, Walworth.



## CHAPTER XXII

### *ARROWS OF THE CHACE*

“Yea, he sent out his arrows and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.”—PSALMS.

THE books of lectures which Ruskin wrote as Professor at Oxford, the work of teaching there, the guide-books and subsidiary papers of the period, the writing of *Fors Clavigera*, and the enterprises in connection with the St. George's Guild were all carried on, as we have seen, under a great and constant strain on his emotions. But to these multitudinous labours another and an exciting one has to be added. This consisted of frequent letters to the newspapers, or of letters of a public character which the recipients sent to the newspapers. These were collected, one hundred and fifty-two in number, by “An Oxford Pupil” in 1880, and the greater part of them had been written before 1878.

#### I

Ruskin's contributions to the press were as miscellaneous as voluminous. The collection of 1880 was arranged under the heads Art Criticism, Public Institutions, Pre-Raphaelitism, Turner, Pictures and Artists, Architecture and Restoration, Geology, Politics and War, Political Economy, Railways, Servants and Houses, Roman Inundations, Education, Women, Literary Criticism and Miscellaneous. What is the nature of these contributions, what their place in Ruskin's life and work, and what their value? The questions have been answered by two critics of high authority—Ruskin himself and Mark Pattison.

Ruskin has defined their nature in one of the happiest of his titles, *Arrows of the Chace*. Like other happy things,

it did not occur at once. Letters to Mr. Wedderburn, the "Oxford Pupil" who edited the collection, enable us to trace Ruskin in pursuit of the right phrase:—

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"(14th April, 1880.)—For 'Public Letters' I certainly don't care as a title. It's a lovely afternoon and I must go out, and hope some mellifluous nomenclature will come into my head in the sun."

"(16th April.)—Your letters always are a delight to me, and hearing of this letter-book is a great pride and amusement to me, and there's not the least fear of your doing anything wrong in it. The title, of course, I like my finger in, that I may lick it afterwards if the title's nice, but all the rest I leave with secure comfort to you."

"(22nd April.)—I've been thinking every morning before I got up for a title, but it's very difficult. 'Spare Minutes,' 'Spent Shot,' 'Surdis auribus' are the three best I've got. You may guess how bad the three worst were."

(Mr. Wedderburn then suggested "A Quiver of Arrows.")

"(25th April.)—It is curious that I had thought myself of 'Lost Arrows,' and your quotation would be delicious, and your objections to the other names are all sound. Howbeit, I can't resolve this Sunday morning, and I think the 'Quiver' is a little too poetical. I *incline* in spite of the Latin to the 'Surdis.' It's so thoroughly *true*, and people would find out and be impressed by that fact. But I'll think more."

"(4th May.)—It's very nice having a respite still. I thought of 'Totus in Illis' and of 'Here and There,' but they're neither here nor there. I'm not sure my own motto 'To-day' might do, but am so busy with Scott. I dare not trust my wits."

"(14th May.)—Will 'Signals on the Old Road' do?"

"(19th May.)—Yes, will think. I like 'The Faggot.' I don't mind its being called sticks (why not rods?). I think it will do."

"(5th Aug.)—At last I have got it! 'Arrows of the Chace.'"

The Letters, then, went forth as arrows shot by an archer in the fray; and if often "winged with feathers," certainly they are also, like those of Hiawatha, "tipped with flint." In his Preface to the original collection of 1880—"a model," as was said at the time, "of pure, sweet,

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equable English," and concluding with "one of the finest and loftiest, and at the same time the sweetest and most urbane, sentences to be found in the whole range of purely personal eloquence"<sup>1</sup>—Ruskin explains the value which he himself placed upon the Letters:—

"In the building of a large book, there are always places where an indulged diffuseness weakens the fancy, and prolonged strain subdues the energy. . . . But all these letters were written with fully provoked zeal, under strict allowance of space and time: they contain the choicest and most needful things I could within narrow limits say, out of many contending to be said; expressed with deliberate precision; and recommended by the best art I had in illustration or emphasis. At the time of my life in which most of them were composed, I was fonder of metaphor, and more fertile in simile, than I am now; and I employed both with franker trust in the reader's intelligence. Carefully chosen, they are always a powerful means of concentration; and I could then dismiss in six words, 'thistledown without seeds, and bubbles without colour,' forms of art on which I should now perhaps spend half a page of analytic vituperation; and represent, with a pleasant accuracy which my best methods of outline and exposition could now no more achieve, the entire system of modern plutocratic policy, under the luckily remembered image of the Arabian bridegroom, bewitched with his heels uppermost. . . . Since the letters cost me much trouble; since they interrupted me in pleasant work which was usually liable to take harm by interruption; and since they were likely almost, in the degree of their force, to be refused by the editors of the adverse journals, I never was tempted into writing a word for the public press, unless concerning matters which I had much at heart. And the issue is, therefore, that the volumes contain very nearly the indices of everything I have deeply cared for during the last forty years; while not a few of their political notices relate to events of more profound historical importance than any others that have occurred during the period they cover; and it has not been an uneventful one. . . . Whether I am spared to put into act anything here designed for my country's

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<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, Dec. 18, 1880.

help, or am shielded by death from the sight of her remediless sorrow, I have already done for her as much service as she has will to receive, by laying before her facts vital to her existence, and unalterable by her power, in words of which not one has been warped by interest nor weakened by fear; and which are as pure from selfish passion as if they were spoken already out of another world."

Unlike Ruskin's other books published after 1871, *Arrows of the Chace*, being collected from the newspapers, was sent to them for notice, and it was fortunate in numbering Mark Pattison among its reviewers. His estimate of the book, given in a signed article in the *Academy* (February 12, 1881), does not materially differ from its author's. He disputes, indeed, Ruskin's foible of omniscience "from foreign politics to domestic servants, from war to silk-worms." "Upon art, and all that concerns it," he says, "Mr. Ruskin, however disputable opinions he may have at times broached, stands unrivalled as a judge, an interpreter, an appreciator. But he cannot claim the same deferential hearing when he speaks of . . . the morality of field sports, dress, female franchise, Shakspeare, dramatic reform, and so on *ad infinitum*. It is not that upon any of these things Mr. Ruskin may not have something good to say, but that he cannot expect to transfer to any of these subjects the *prestige* which his special knowledge has justly conferred on his opinions on art. . . . When it comes to speaking of sweeping crossings, the crossing-sweeper is sure to know a thing or two which we do not know." Having entered this *caveat*, Mark Pattison goes on as follows:—

"But what excellent things are scattered up and down these miscellaneous letters! 'A gentleman would hew for himself a log-hut rather than live in modern houses.' 'You can't have art where you have smoke [; you may have it in hell, perhaps, for the Devil is too clever not to consume his own smoke']. 'So far from wishing to give votes to women, I would fain take them away from most men.' 'There is only one way to have good servants; that is, to be worthy of being well served.' 'Good art cannot be



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produced as an investment. You cannot build a good cathedral, if you only build it that you may charge sixpence for admission.' 'We must recognize the duties of governors before we can elect the men fit to perform them.' 'While everybody shrinks at abstract suggestions of there being possible error in a book of Scripture, your sensible English housewife fearlessly rejects Solomon's opinion when it runs slightly counter to her own.' Such sparkling bits of aphoristic wit and wisdom are scattered in profusion over these letters, even those of which the main tenor is paradoxical or unpractical. Without attempting to deny that many of the social and economical opinions and proposals here put forward are of this unpractical character, I think the reader will nevertheless feel himself stirred and animated in a way in which more sober and well-considered suggestions never move him. Mr. Ruskin does but feel more keenly than the rest of us those evils which spoil and darken the wholesomeness and beauty of modern life. When the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together, there are some spirits who feel the anguish too acutely, and cry out in their noble rage that we have but to will it and the evil will disappear. Mr. Ruskin, like other humanitarians, exaggerates the power of human skill and energy to cope with natural conditions. . . . But we are quickened and invigorated for the struggle in which we are all engaged with the misery of the world, and the sluggish and the selfish may be reached by Mr. Ruskin's random arrows where homilies and exhortations are all in vain."<sup>1</sup>

## II

Ruskin sent out his arrows in letters to private correspondents, as well as to the editors of newspapers. The number of such letters in existence is very large, and of the great majority of them what Mr. Henley said of the collection in *Arrows of the Chace* is true: "there is not one but is distinguished by some notable feature, as a touch of fine and pleasant wit, or a stout stroke of satire, or a piece of wisdom nobly thought and luminously phrased,

<sup>1</sup> A very similar estimate of the book was given in *The Athenæum*, Dec. 18, 1880. That review was written by W. E. Henley.

or a fling of whimsical temper." Sound common sense, and good practical advice, are often no less conspicuous. A few examples are here given to illustrate various styles in Ruskin's occasional letters of a semi-public character:—

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(To DR. C. J. GRECE.) "DENMARK HILL, *Sept.* 20, 1869.—My cousin, Mr. Richardson, brought me this morning your pamphlet on negative voting, and showed me your letter. I have looked at the pamphlet with attention; but I am sorry to tell you I take no interest in its subject. I hardly know why you wished me to look at it. If you have read any of my late works (any of my political works at all, lately or long since written) you must have seen that they all speak with supreme contempt of the 'British Constitution,' of elections and popular opinion, and, above all, of 'Liberty.' In *Time and Tide* I have told my working-men friends frankly that their opinions, or voices, are 'not worth a rat's squeak.'<sup>1</sup> How should I care for the methods of their registering? As far as I can judge, there are several very true remarks and useful suggestions in what you have advanced in this pamphlet, but the wisest system of voting that human brains could devise would be of no use as long as the majority of the voters were fools, which is manifestly as yet the fact."

(To a Correspondent.) "OXFORD, *Feb.* 10, 1872.—I am indeed aware that printing and paper-making machines are made of iron. I am aware also, which you perhaps are not, that ploughshares and knives and forks are. And I am aware, which you certainly are not, that I am writing with an iron pen. And you will find in *Fors Clavigera*, and in all my other writings, which you may have done me the honour to read, that my statement is that things which have to do the work of iron should be made of iron, and things which have to do the work of wood should be made of wood; but that (for instance) hearts should not be made of iron, nor heads of wood—and this last statement you may wisely consider, when next it enters into yours to ask questions."

(To W. B. PULLAR.) "BRANTWOOD, *April* 28, 1873.—In your general work, keep cool, and never waste energy in trying to teach people who don't want to be taught. Form your own opinions

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 380.

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firmly—act on them quietly, without hope, fear, disappointment, or anger. If any one wishes to hear, speak; if any one questions you, answer—and be ready to meet all honest questioning. Chiefly, take care of your health, and secure your own peaceful livelihood before everything.”

(*To a Manchester Manufacturer.*) 1874.—“Have you read Carlyle’s *Shooting Niagara*, carefully? Every sentence of it is pregnant and intense. For me, I have always been misunderstood in the strangest way. People *will* have it that I want them to be moral and *unbusinesslike*, whereas my assertion always has been—you cannot be businesslike *but* by being moral. Meet to injure each other, and you will all—be injured. Meet to help each other, and you will all—be helped. That is absolute common-sense in all human business, morality altogether apart.”

(*To W. B. PULLAR.*) “BRANTWOOD, 3rd Sept., ’75.—I am indeed most grateful for your letter, though I have a quantity of work to do now which forbids all but essential answer. Time only ‘mollifies’ matters to me by killing me. That tranquillity is only a form of death. But I am thankful to have anger enough in me to last me for fifty lives—and love enough to reach some living yet from its home with those who are not.”

(*To a Girl.*) “BRANTWOOD [1876 ?].—First, be your mother’s true daughter in all needful service, and above all in educating your thoughts so as to love her as exclusively and deeply as possible. But be resolute in feeling and saying that you owe duty to others as well as to her. The ‘Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’ has to be spoken, I believe, to all parents, some day or other. They accept it when it is a matter of income, scarcely ever as one of principle. Secondly. Give up all thoughts of work in London. You might as well work in mines or prisons. There is *no* remedy for London but to destroy its rich luxury, and that is not your business. Thirdly. Trouble not yourself nor any one else about Church quarrels. Keep yourself invulnerably silent. Be gentle to everybody who is gentle and loving, helpful when you can help, and sometimes join in any conventicle or household worship that comes handy, as well as in your own. Don’t call yourself anything. What any of us *are* has no name, for only God knows it.”

As *Fors Clavigera* became more widely known, Ruskin's name figured more frequently in the newspapers. If the book called forth derision in some quarters, it attracted to him devout disciples from others. As his work at Oxford caused him to be generally called in some circles "The Professor," so *Fors* and the St. George's Guild won for him in others the title of "The Master." It may be doubted whether this was altogether a gain. His correspondence was greatly increased, to the serious detriment of other work; and the atmosphere of uncritical adulation, which increasingly surrounded him, was perhaps not without some effect in accentuating a tendency to absolutism, petulance, and over-emphasis. In many of Ruskin's "Arrows of the Chace," whether sent to the newspapers or addressed to correspondents, there is the same note of anger and despair that meets the reader so often in *Fors Clavigera*. Yet one likes to think that in all but the darkest hours he had the craftsman's or the swordsman's pleasure in a sentence well pieced or a blow deftly struck. His old friend, Dr. John Brown, was of that conviction. "You must have pleasure sometimes in your work," he wrote, "though fierce indignation not seldom lacerates your heart. Did you not like that sentence beginning 'A shepherd maid' and ending with 'the ruins of the world'?" Dr. Brown was writing of a passage in *The Bible of Amiens*; but a like felicity, or force, of language appears on many a page of the *Arrows*, and habitual energy of diction, as has been well said, was "never yet practised by a melancholy man, and must have armed Ruskin himself, indignant, insurgent, menacing, against that profounder calamity, sadness."<sup>1</sup> But as the clouds descended, the anger is less relieved:—

(*On Modern Restoration.*) "VENICE, 15th April, 1877.—MY DEAR SIR,—It is impossible for any one to know the horror and contempt with which I regard modern restoration—but it is so great that it simply paralyzes me in despair,—and in the sense of such difference in all thought and feeling between me and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, Dec. 7, 1907.



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people I live in the midst of, almost makes it useless for me to talk to them. Of course all restoration is accursed architect's jobbery, and will go on as long as they can get their filthy bread by such business. But things are worse here than in England: you have little there left to lose—here, every hour is ruining buildings of inestimable beauty and historical value—simply to keep stone-layers at work. I am obliged to hide my face from it all, and work at other things, or I should die of mere indignation and disgust.”

(*To a Glasgow Correspondent.*) “OXFORD, Dec. 1877.—SIR,—Don't waste your money on buying my books, or anybody else's. To love the beautiful in painting you must first love it in nature, then be long among noble art. You have little nature left at Glasgow within 30 miles, and no art within 300. Don't be ridiculous and affected whatever you are. If you live at Glasgow you may be happy in Glasgow ways, and in those only. All the books on earth or in heaven can't teach you to love the beautiful (from the Apocalypse down).”

Here is one of the last occasional letters, written before Ruskin's breakdown:—

“HERNE HILL, 19 Dec., 1877.—MY DEAR SIR,—I am sure you know as well as I that the best message for any of your young men who really are trying to read their Bibles is—whatever they first chance to read—on whatever morning. But here's a Pagan message for them, which will be a grandly harmonized bass for whatever words they get on the New Year.

‘Inter spem curamque, timores inter et iras,  
Omnes crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum.’”

Ruskin himself was presently to stand in utter need of all such comfort as messages, Biblical or Pagan, could afford him.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### "THE DREAM"

(1877-1878)

' Not incognizant, now, of some of the darker realms of Proserpina."—*Proserpina*, ch. xi. (1879).

"I HAVE been lately glancing at many biographies, and have been much struck by the number of deaths which occur between the ages of fifty and sixty (and, for the most part, in the earlier half of the decade), in cases where the brain has been much used emotionally: or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, where the heart, and the faculties of perception connected with it, have stimulated the brain-action. Supposing such excitement to be temperate, equable, and joyful, I have no doubt the tendency of it would be to prolong, rather than depress, the vital energies. But the emotions of indignation, grief, controversial anxiety and vanity, or hopeless, and therefore uncontending, scorn, are all of them as deadly to the body as poisonous air or polluted water; and when I reflect how much of the active part of my past life has been spent in these states,—and that what may remain to me of life can never more be in any other,—I begin to ask myself, with somewhat pressing arithmetic, how much time is likely to be left me."—So Ruskin had written in 1875.<sup>1</sup> He returned to England after his long sojourn at Venice on June 16, 1877. Nine months afterwards the beginning of the end came upon him in the shape of a nearly fatal attack of brain-fever. His sojourn in Venice had been a busy and not an unhappy time, but some of those who saw him there noticed that he was sadly overtaxing his strength. The first entry in his diary after

<sup>1</sup> In the Introduction to *Deucalion*, dated July 13, 1875.

CHAP. his return shows him resolute to redeem the time likely to  
XXIII. be left him:—

“17th June, Sunday, DENMARK HILL, HERNE HILL.—I must write both, passing my mother’s window in sweet afternoon sunshine yesterday: safe home, after much labour and difficulty and some expense in persevering against winter cold. Leicester Abbey, Carnarvon, and Narni<sup>1</sup> beside me; and the nightingales singing from three till now incessantly. My own old hills soft in goodly light, and I very thankful for all things—chiefly for Joanie being well and happy, and my own fairly preserved sight clear enough on the English meadows—my old nursery feeling like true home. May I value, and use, rightly, what hours remain to me in it.”

Ruskin was one who ever numbered his days and applied his heart unto wisdom; but the secrets of health were denied to him: he was incapable of mental rest, and he knew not how to apply narcotics to the emotions. His physician-friend, Dr. Simon, wondered not that the breakdown occurred, but that it had not occurred long before. “You know,” he wrote to Professor Norton, “without my telling it, all that has brought this dreadful disaster on him,—the utterly spendthrift way in which (with imagination less and less controlled by judgment) he has for these last years been at work with a dozen different irons in the fire—each enough to engage one average man’s mind. And his emotions all the while as hard-worked as his intellect—they always blowing the bellows for its furnace.”<sup>2</sup> All this is known also to readers of the preceding chapters; and in the months following Ruskin’s return from Venice there was no relaxation of the intellectual strain, or the emotional stress.

## I

Ruskin spent the first month after his return partly at Herne Hill, partly at Oxford, and partly in paying visits. “Fairly well myself,” he noted in his diary (July 16), “but

<sup>1</sup> Drawings by Turner which Ruskin, during his absence, had commissioned Mr. Severn to buy at the Novar Sale.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Ruskin to C. E. Norton*, vol. ii. p. 147.

anxious a little about giddiness or dizziness, scarcely perceptible, but not cured since my overwork at Venice; Joanie came in evening and all was bright." Quiet hours with Mrs. Severn were what he liked best, and were best for him. "Delicious evening with Joanie," he notes again (Dec. 19), "telling each other ghost stories." In London he spoke at a meeting of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (July 10); he went to theatres and picture-shows; and in the number of *Fors Clavigera* for July he wrote an account of the first exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery which, for its attack upon Whistler, was to involve him in an action for libel. Other pages in *Fors* at this date show him deeply immersed in the affairs of the St. George's Guild. He visited Birmingham, as the guest of Mr. George Baker, one of the Trustees of the Guild and then mayor of the town. On this occasion he inspected the Guild's property at Bewdley, and the beauty of the woodland and orchards above the Severn shore greatly delighted him. But the drive thither lay through mean streets and districts of the "nailing" industry. He was taken into a cottage where two women were at work; the scene and the thoughts it excited are set down in *Fors*:—

"Looking up at us in quietly silent question,—stood, each in my sight an ominous *Fors*, the two *Clavigeræ*. At a word, they laboured, with ancient Vulcanian skill. Foot and hand in perfect time: no dance of Muses on Parnassian mead in truer measure;—no sea fairies upon yellow sands more featly footed. Four strokes with the hammer in the hand: one ponderous and momentary blow ordered of the balanced mass by the touch of the foot; and the forged nail fell aside, finished, on its proper heap;—level-headed, wedge-pointed, a thousand lives soon to depend daily on its driven grip of the iron way. So wrought they,—the English Matron and Maid;—so was it their darg to labour from morning to evening,—seven to seven,—by the furnace side,—the winds of summer fanning the blast of it. The wages of the Matron *Fors*, I found, were eight shillings a week;—her husband, otherwise and variously employed, could make sixteen. Three shillings a week for rent and taxes, left, as I count, for the guerdon of their united



CHAP. labour, if constant, and its product providently saved, fifty-five  
XXIII. pounds a year, on which they had to feed and clothe themselves and their six children; eight souls in their little Worcestershire ark. . . . Do you think that the Maker of the world intended all but one in a thousand of His creatures to live in these dark-streets; and the one, triumphant over the rest, to go forth alone into the green fields? ” (Letter 80.)

After this visit to the Midlands, Ruskin settled for some weeks at Brantwood, where the usual accumulation of proofs and letters, with the constant rush of jostling schemes and thoughts, awaited him. A year or two before, in writing the Preface to *Deucalion*, he had described, as he looked through his note-books and desks, the vast stores of material which were still unused—the material for “a history of Florentine art in six octavo volumes, an analysis of Attic art in three volumes,” and so on through a list of seventy-three projected volumes. The passage was ironical; though the manuscripts which Ruskin left behind him show that he had made notes on several of the subjects, and indeed that other items might have been added to the list. Elsewhere he describes the various books which he had in progress through the press at the same time; a new one was now added to the list—*The Laws of Fésolé*—of which the first part appeared in September of this year. He was at work at this same time on *Proserpina*, on *Deucalion*, on Sir Philip Sidney’s Psalter (*Rock Honeycomb*), on new editions of *Unto this Last* and *The Two Paths*, and on the usual monthly instalments of *Fors Clavigera*. Moreover, *Mornings in Florence* was only just off his hands, and *St. Mark’s Rest* was still incomplete. In October he delivered a lecture at Kendal on “Yewdale and its Streamlets,” in which he applied some of his geological heresies and searching questions to the hills and valleys of his Lakeland home. The lecture was repeated with some variations at Eton (Dec. 8). The minute, signed by J. K. Stephen, gives a lucid synopsis of the lecture, and notices Ruskin’s “invective against Greek terms in English science, which might be paralleled by the introduction into modern Greek of such a scientific hybrid as *Nastibeastiums*.”

In the late summer Ruskin enjoyed some quiet and restful days at Brantwood—mornings on which he could note “the perfectness and brightness, and delicacy and infinite quantity to be looked at” (August 11); or evenings, with “a quite exquisite Italian sky to south with divinest jewels of white cirri, and a long riband like a Renaissance angel’s sash, or Botticelli Madonna’s, flying to the zenith” (August 4). And there were pleasant visits to receive or pay. He went over, for instance, to Ambleside to see Matthew Arnold, with whom, however, he was “much disappointed” (Sept. 13); but he much enjoyed a visit from Aubrey de Vere, who was “ever so nice” (Sept. 16). Another visitor who gave pleasure was Mr. T. C. Horsfall of Manchester, in whose scheme for establishing an Art Museum Ruskin was greatly interested. The scheme took shape in the “Manchester Art Museum and University Settlement” (Ancoats Hall, Every Street, Manchester), which for many years has been a centre of “sweetness and light” in that city. The Museum includes several of Ruskin’s drawings, as also many copies after Turner by Mr. William Ward, in some cases touched by Ruskin. He wrote a few notes also descriptive of these copies, which the Committee have placed under them “as one of the many proofs he has given them of his interest in their work.”

For the most part, however, Ruskin’s diary of these months at Brantwood tells a tale of strain and weariness. He had, moreover, a great anxiety in the serious illness of Mrs. Severn. He records, with thanks to God, the “priceless relief” of her recovery; and so again, “Joanie going on well, which is everything to me.” It was a period, he notes, of “profoundest emotion to me.” This was in October, but already Ruskin was greatly overwrought. “Feel very much overworked now,” he writes (July 20), “in head and eyes”; and, again, “still anxious about sense of blood going to head” (July 23). “Dim-eyed and confused with mixture of music, Yewdale streams, and St. Mark’s mosaics, buzzing in my head with free trade and Venice fruit law all the morning” (Aug. 5). “Feel up to work this morning (Aug. 6), in any single thing, but not in two dozen.” Yet

CHAP. he went on with the two dozen to the end. "I'm perfectly  
XXIII. overwhelmed," he wrote to Mr. Allen (Sept. 20), "under the quantity of things which must be kept in my mind, now, going like a juggler's balls in the air—a touch first to one, then another."

The state of anger and of isolation, into which the writing of *Fors Clavigera* was apt to throw him, was a dangerous aggravation of overwork. One seems to see him in the later Letters constantly fighting, but in vain, against excitement; certainly he is constantly promising the reader that he means in future to keep calm and adopt a gentler tone. "After this seventh year," he writes in the last Letter of 1877, "I am going out into the highways and hedges; but no more with expostulation. I have wearied myself in the fire enough; and now, under the wild roses and traveller's joy of the lane hedges, will take what rest may be in my pilgrimage." A year before, he had made a like vow. "One quite fixed plan for the last year of *Fors*," he wrote to Miss Beever from Venice (Nov. 13, 1876), "is that there shall be absolutely no abuse or controversy in it." He permitted himself, however, "a good fling at the Bishops to finish with." But those blameful words were not the last. To his state of nervous irritability at the end of 1877 must be attributed the tone of the correspondence with Miss Octavia Hill, an old, true, and well-tried friend, and its publication in Letter 86 (Feb. 1878). He allowed the correspondence to stand, when he afterwards revised the book; but at a later date (1888) he spoke to a friend of his desire to "ask forgiveness" for his "anger and pride." Yet there is much to explain Ruskin's vexation with his old friend, though nothing to excuse the terms in which it was expressed or the publicity which he gave to it. He was throwing hard work at the time into his St. George's Guild; writing catalogues of its collection, issuing an *Abstract* of its objects and constitution. He was watching eagerly for help from friends and disciples, when he received from Sir Thomas Acland and Mr. Cowper-Temple the announcement of their resignation as Trustees of the Guild. He knew not, he says, until then "whether some noble of England might not hear and

understand in time, and take upon himself Mastership and Captaincy in this sacred war.”<sup>1</sup> This was a heavy disappointment to Ruskin; and it was at the same time that he heard from “a St. George’s Companion of healthily sound and impatient temper”—but, as one must think, of sadly unsound judgment—“of a case known to herself, in which a man of great kindness of disposition, who was well inclined to give aid to St. George, had been diverted from such intention by hearing doubts expressed by Miss Hill of my ability to conduct any practical enterprise successfully.” Ruskin was as one wounded in the house of his friends.

## II

In November there was an interlude at Oxford. The lectures, entitled “Readings in *Modern Painters*,” which he then delivered, were among the most successful of his courses. I was an undergraduate at Oxford at the time, and I have already quoted from them more than once. They showed no sign of failing power, except perhaps towards the end of the course, in a disconnectedness greater even than was usual in the case of lectures not fully written out. Ruskin himself attached great importance to them, and his audience heard him gladly. They were in part autobiographical; the readings from his own *magnum opus* were magnificently rendered; and he put into this course much of his most earnest and most definitely Christian exhortations. At the first lecture he had distinguished visitors, to his no small embarrassment:—

(To MRS. SEVERN.) “C. C. C., OXFORD, 7th Nov., ’77. . . . I’ve never had such a terrible time. . . . I tumbled into the last day of the University Commission, and instead of only Acland in my little private ante-lecture-room, there was Lord Selborne waiting for me, all by himself, and I had to take him in to the lecture, and couldn’t *get* him in! nor myself neither at first, for the room was crammed, and the crowd in actual corridor as at door of a

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 78.



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theatre ; and poor Elinor and Mr. Furneaux didn't get in, I believe, for I had to think of everything at once ; and Mrs. Acland couldn't get in herself, but begged me to take in somebody else instead of her ; and Mrs. Liddell and Alice couldn't get into Wonderland a bit, nor the Dean neither. . . . But at last I got Lord Selborne into his place, and then had to invoke Mr. Macdonald from afar, and I was frightened, dreadfully, for I had never thought of a word I was going to say till the day before, and had scrawled it too small, and couldn't read, for it was a dark day and I had no spectacles. But I began clearly, and got them interested, and the lecture was as good, I think, as I ever gave, and the audience all as quiet as mice to hear. I got some bits read at last, and it was all right ; only then I had to go all over my schools with Lord Selborne and the Commissioners and say, at a shot, what I wanted done, and I didn't know a bit what the Dean wanted me to say, nor Acland, and they both beside me, and it was terrible ; and I didn't sleep, and got up at two in the morning, and arranged drawers till four."

The course as a whole was equally successful, -and the last lecture as crowded as any of them. "Finished the most important course I have ever yet given in Oxford," he wrote in his diary (December 2, 1877), "and I am fairly cheerful in sense of remaining power for great tasks, if I am worthy of doing them ; the spirit willing enough, and the rest weak." He spent Christmas at Oxford, and the close of the year found him in good spirits, as the entries in his diary show :—

"*Last day of December, 1877, OXFORD.*—Up in good time, full of fruitful thoughts, but as usual jostling one another so that I can't get to work."

"*1st January, 1878.*—Began the year with Turner at Egglestone and Bolton, Okehampton and Carnarvon, putting them out to look at, as the bells of Christ Church and Merton rang in the year. Now up in good time, to my work ; lighted both my fires ; and had good thoughts of Immortality, as taught to us by every happy work and true soul of man."

On New Year's Day he went to Windsor for a few days on a visit to Prince Leopold. The Prince was not well at the

time; Ruskin sat much with him, and was glad to be able to interest and cheer him. "Certain colloquies of Mr. Ruskin's at the bedside of Prince Leopold—as he lay recovering from perilous illness, and still in danger of a relapse—will dwell in the mind of him who heard them," says Frederic Myers, "as ideal examples of the contact of an elder and younger soul. How close was that union in a region where earthly rank was swept away! How poor a thing did any life seem then which had not known the hallowing of sorrow."<sup>1</sup> They went together to a "loveliest service in St. George's Chapel," and Ruskin found his pupil "very full of good." He made some notes of the pictures and drawings in the Royal Collection, but the Castle itself did not appeal to him:—

(To RAWDON BROWN.) "WINDSOR CASTLE, *Jan. 1, 1878.*—It is doubly my duty to write you just one affectionate line to-day, for right beginning of the year, and that it may take you the pleasant news of the pleasant memory which Prince Leopold has of you. He was talking of you nearly all through dinner, and seems to have been entirely happy in his visit to Venice. . . . I am sorry not to be with you again, this winter. But I have not got the half of the things done I had to do this summer; and I found my sight would not bear the kind of work I had been doing with the lens, for another winter. I am full of sorrow for a thousand things I cannot do,—do not add to the fullness by distrusting the regard with which I am ever gratefully and faithfully yours. . . ."

(To MISS SUSAN BEEVER.) "WINDSOR CASTLE, *Jan. 2.*—I'm horribly sulky this morning, for I expected to have a room with a view, if the room was ever so little, and I've got a great big one looking into the Castle yard, and I feel exactly as if I was in a big modern county gaol with beautiful turrets of modern Gothic. I came to see Prince Leopold, who has been a prisoner to his sofa lately, but I trust he is better; he is very bright and gentle, under severe and almost continual pain. My dear little Susie, about that rheumatism of yours? If it wasn't for that, how happy we both ought to be, living in Thwaites and Woods, instead of nasty

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<sup>1</sup> *Science and a Future Life*, p. 220.

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castles ! Well, about that Shakespeare guide ? I cannot, cannot, at all fancy what it is. In and out among the stars ; it sounds like a plan for stringing the stars. I am so very glad you have told me of it. ‘ Unwritten books in my brain ’ ? Yes, but also in how many other brains of quiet people, books unthought of, ‘ In the Book and Volume ’ which will be read some day in Heaven, aloud, ‘ When saw we thee ? ’ Yes, and ‘ When *read* we ourselves ? ’ My dear Susie, if I were to think really *lost* what you, for instance, have never *found* in your own powers of receiving and giving pleasure, the beautiful faculties you have scarcely venturing even to show the consciousness of them, when it awakes in you, what a woeful conception I should have of God’s not caring for us ! He will gather all the wheat into His garner.”

(To H.R.H. PRINCE LEOPOLD.) “BRANTWOOD, 16th Jany., 1878.—I have waited that from my own home I might in quiet gratitude acknowledge the kindnesses with which you have crowned the beginning of this year to me, and strengthened me with more hope than I have been able to feel for many past years, and indeed, in the same deep and fixed measure, to feel at all. Your Royal Highness cannot, I feel assured, be doubtful of my especial joy in the gracious letter written by your own hand, which I received two days ago, not only for my Father’s sake or my own, but because in the few words that closed it you admitted me so far into the seclusion of your thought as to give me courage in saying to you what only my own experience of very great sorrow enables me to say with certainty—that by our acceptance, at the hand of our Father in Heaven, of all that He appoints whether for those whom we love or for ourselves, as indeed a Father’s ordinance,—every distress will become to us at last ordinances, every distress will become to us at last a blessing, chiefly in the power given us to feel for others, but not a little in enabling us to form higher hopes than any which this world has to give, and in quenching and subduing the mean interests and petty prides which inevitably choke the currents of a too happy life. Many good men I have known, untroubled—but none, without pain, brought to high discernment or perfectly beneficent power. I do not like to speak, after these, of any lower matters, but must yet also most earnestly thank your Royal Highness for your letter to the Trustees of the

National Gallery,<sup>1</sup> of which the issue cannot but complete all that I have been endeavouring to do in the Oxford schools to a perfectness beyond my best hopes hitherto."

From Windsor Ruskin went to London for a few days, where he saw Carlyle and Miss Ingelow, and spent a merry evening with Stacy Marks. He then returned to Oxford, and set to work upon a new series of notes upon his collection. The notes themselves are bright and lucid, but Ruskin's diary shows that he felt the strain of them:—

"*January 9.*—How maddeningly the days have flown since the new year at Windsor. Yesterday terrible work in the schools, the Principal of St. Mary's Hall writing for me (Madonna help, surely), and yet such miserable heaping of impossibility on impossibility, in things that shriek out to be done, and at last—mere dreaming about impossibility, instead of doing. Up till twelve last night and at half-past five this morning—at work now, fairly lighting both fires, by quarter to seven."

"*January 10.*—'I am the Lord that healeth thee.' I really need my text to-day, being utterly cast down by the difficulty of managing either my health or my business, under present pressure."

From Oxford Ruskin went on a visit to Hawarden. Miss Mary Gladstone (Mrs. Drew) was an admirer of Ruskin's writings, and had come to make his acquaintance through Burne-Jones and other common friends. He had dined with Mr. Gladstone in London earlier in the year; and Mrs. Drew now saw a favourable opportunity for suggesting to her father to invite Ruskin to Hawarden. He had printed the last of his recent Oxford lectures in the *Nineteenth Century* for January 1878, and this paper had profoundly stirred Mr. Gladstone. One of the principal theses maintained in the lecture was just such as would have appealed to Gladstone. It was "the reality of that ministration of the good angels, and of that real adversity of the principalities and powers of Satan, in which, without exception, all earnest Christians

<sup>1</sup> In support of Ruskin's request for the loan to his Drawing School of a collection of sketches by Turner.



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have believed, and the appearance of which, to the imagination of the greatest and holiest of them, has been the root, without exception, of all the greatest art produced by the human mind or hand in this world." Ruskin went with some trepidation into what he considered enemy's country, and had prepared a line of retreat, as Canon Scott Holland, who was also of the party, has described :—

"As we drove up from the station, I discovered that he had the darkest view possible of his host, imbibed from the 'Master,' Carlyle, to whose imagination Mr. Gladstone figured, apparently, as the symbol of all with which he was at war. Ruskin was, therefore, extremely timid and suspicious, and had secured, in view of a possible retreat, a telegram which might at any moment summon him home; this telegram loomed largely the first day, and we were constantly under its menace. But as hour by hour he got happier, the reference to its possible arrival came more and more rarely, and finally it became purely mythical."<sup>1</sup>

The visit was a great success. The host put his guest entirely at his ease. "Mr. Gladstone retained throughout the tone of courteous and deferential reverence as for a man whom he profoundly honoured. And Mr. Ruskin threw off every touch of suspicion with which he had arrived, and showed with all the frankness and charm of a child his new sense of the greatness and nobility of the character of his host." So says Canon Holland; and I have heard from another member of the party of the indelible impression made upon him by the bearing of the two men—each of them expressing his convictions with deference towards the other, and both of them displaying in perfection the graces of old-world courtesy. Mr. Gladstone found Ruskin's conversation "interesting, of course, as it must always be with him," and Ruskin himself "in some respects an unrivalled guest, and those important respects too." Ruskin on his side left Hawarden almost persuaded to be a Gladstonian. "I have had two very happy days at Mr. Gladstone's," he wrote to Sir Robert Collins at Windsor (January 16)—"happy chiefly in enabling me to end all doubt in my

<sup>1</sup> "Gladstone and Ruskin," in *The Commonwealth*, July 1898.

own mind as to his simple and most kindly and unambitious character, and therefore to read all he says and does in its due light. It is very beautiful to see him with his family, and his family with him; and his quite naïve delight in showing me his trees went straight to my heart."

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### III

The interlude now ends. From Hawarden Ruskin went to Brantwood, where yet fresh work was waiting. His acquisition of several drawings at the Novar Sale had, as he said, "set him on Turner again," and he had agreed to a proposal from the Fine Art Society that he should exhibit his collection in London. The arrangement of the drawings, and the description of them, interested him greatly, but also taxed his strength severely. The exhibition was to open early in March; the catalogue was much in arrear, and Ruskin worked at it against time. He was interrupted by other calls upon his pen. The widow of W. H. Harrison had begged him to write an appreciation of his old friend; this piece of "autobiographical reminiscence," dated February 1, 1878, is particularly bright, clear, and sparkling. And so also is much of the Turner Catalogue. But this was work which excited no less than it interested him. The art of Turner was to him a microcosm; it represented to his imagination all the beauty, all the sadness, all the mystery and the suffering of the world. The artist-magician had in his latest period soared, more and more, "cloudlike and unpent," into strange regions of almost formless fancy. His interpreter, as Turner's drawings came one by one before him, found his feelings intensified; but his command over them, and the thoughts which they called up, gradually relaxed. His dreams became frequent. One of them, recorded in his diary, is significant enough of the race against time and strength which Ruskin was now running:—

"*January 31.*—A most strange nightmare of overturning a great sarcophagus down a hill in some ornamental Tuileries-like gardens, and sneaking away for fear of being caught—nobody else

CHAP. XXIII. in the gardens for a mile ; and then getting into an ugly town, and not being able to support conversation properly ! and always wondering when the police would come after me,—finishing off with being left by an express train without courage to get into the carriage—every one going faster and faster past me. Like these days of January ; but kind and grateful good-bye to them. They've been good to me."

The days rushed by, and Ruskin went on labouring after them. His birthday (Feb. 8) found him "thankful to be down at seven in the morning, or only five minutes later, in good active health, ready either for writing or wood-chopping, on my fifty-ninth birthday, and with so much in my hands to do for everybody." "Such things to do, such things to be !" But the strength to do them was gradually failing :—

"*February 9.*—Only not wretched, from being weary with wretchedness in thinking of old days so selfish, yet so happy ; now I am kind and sorrowful."

"*February 11.*—I stop writing, and get dreaming ; and the light gains, and the day ; and it has—how much to do, if it can ; and a great deal that it must, even if it can't !"

"*February 12.*—A day gained ! I've been thinking it was 13th. Down in dreamy seatterment and bewilderment—the horror of this Turk war, and shame of my own selfishness and faithlessness, heavily weighing on me. Yet I slept well, and dreamed that *φίλη* wrote to me about R."

It was on this day that he wrote the exquisite passage with which the Preface to the Turner Notes concludes :—

"Morning breaks as I write, along those Comiston Fells, and the level mists, motionless, and grey beneath the rose of the moorlands, veil the lower woods, and the sleeping village, and the long lawns by the lake-shore.

"Oh, that some one had but told me in my youth, when all my heart seemed to be set on these colours and clouds, that appear for a little while and then vanish away, how little my love of them would serve me, when the silence of lawn and wood in the dews of morning should be completed ; and all my thoughts should be of those whom, by neither, I was to meet more !"

The manuscript of the first, and of the final, version of this passage is given in facsimile in the Library Edition. The writing is still firm and well formed. On the next day he worked at *Fors Clavigera*; the letter shows how much he was stirred by anxiety about public affairs, and especially by the Eastern Question, in which his interest had been heightened by his visit to Mr. Gladstone. This Letter (No. 87, "The Snow-Manger") is intelligible to one who can trace the allusions and follow the rapid turns in the writer's mind; but it shows, as he subsequently said, "a dangerous state of more or less excited temper and too much quickened thought."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, over that Letter, as in the Turner Notes, the spirit of brain-storm is palpably hovering; one can almost hear the beating of its wings. Dreams, visions, and spirit-messages thickened upon him. "I've done much work 'to-day,'" he wrote to Miss Anderson (Feb. 17), "and am tired; but greatly pleased at some messages from Venice, and from other places—farther away." "I *must* get to work," he wrote in his diary on February 15, "or I shall get utterly into dreamland." Working and dreaming were alike dangerous; he chose work, and on February 21 he finished the first draft of his Turner Catalogue. It is possible to trace the connexion of the thoughts that he set down in these last-written of the Notes, but the power of knitting them together—the command of form and coherence—was palpably failing. The last entry in his diary is dated February 22. Thoughts of his Lady in heaven—of loving friends on earth—of figures in favourite pictures—of the Doge Gritti and St. Ursula—jostled each other in his mind. Among the last words which came from him, before he dropped the pen, were Tintoret's saying "Sempre si fa il mare maggiore," and a verse from the *Te Deum*: "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." The ruling instincts of his spirit were strong even at the moment of collapse, and his mind was overthrown with the praise of God in his heart.

There followed what in a blank page of his diary he

<sup>1</sup> Letter 88.



CHAP. afterwards called "The Dream," or "The Long Dream."  
XXIII. He had fallen into a state of delirium, and for some weeks his condition caused the greatest anxiety. Daily and, afterwards, weekly bulletins were issued, and appeared in the papers, not only at home, but in America and in Italy.<sup>1</sup> The attack of brain-fever was most severe, but Ruskin's strong constitution enabled him to conquer it. After six weeks he was moved into his study. The diary begins again upon June 18, with an entry attributing his recovery to the care of the cousin who gave and received so much love:—

"18th June, 1878.—On the 7th of April, this year, I got first down into my study, after illness such as I never thought to know. Joanie brought me through it. To-day I begin my Plato again. If now I can but keep in peace—and quiet labour!"

But already, some weeks before, he had resumed work. His friends and admirers took occasion on his recovery to purchase and present to him, as a "small token of the feelings with which he is regarded," the drawing, which he had so long coveted, of the Splügen Pass by Turner. He set himself, in return, first to complete the Turner Catalogue, adding an Epilogue, of easy and graceful reminiscence, explaining the history of the drawing; and next in arranging for exhibition, with a catalogue of notes, "a little autobiography" of "His own Handiwork illustrative of Turner." His gratitude for the solicitude of his friends was expressed in many private letters, from which I here select a few:—

(To GEORGE ALLEN.) "BRANTWOOD, 15th April, 1878.—DEAR ALLEN,—How good and kind you are, and have always been. I trust, whatever happens to me, that your position with the copy-right of my books, if anybody cares for them, and with the friends

<sup>1</sup> "'Sed multæ urbes et publica vota vicerunt.' Neque id indignum memoratu puto quod nuperimme mihi in Italia commoranti contigit videre quantæ sollicitudines ob ejus

salutem, quantæ preces moverentur in ea terra cujus ille artes et monumenta tam disertissime illustraverit." Senior Proctor's speech, April 24 (*St. George*, vol. vi. p. 109).

gained by your honesty and industry, is secure on your little piece of Kentish home territory. I write this letter to release you from all debt to me of any kind, and to leave you, with my solemn thanks for all the energy and faith of your life, given to me so loyally, in all that I ever tried to do for good, to do now what is best for your family and yourself. As I look back on my life in this closing time I find myself in debt, to every friend that loved me, for what a score of lives could not repay, and would fain say to them all, as to you, words of humiliation which I check only because they are so vain. Ever (Nay—in such a time as this what 'ever' is there except 'to-day'—once more) your thankful and sorrowful friend—Master, no more."

(*To H.R.H. PRINCE LEOPOLD.*) "BRANTWOOD, 29th April, 1878.—SIR,—Your more than kind letter has been medicinal and cordial to me, not least in the assurance it gives me of your own recovery from illness, and of your pleasure in giving sympathy to my dear Venetian 'Papa,' Mr. Brown, and to Toni, and to his doggie, which they and I alike rejoice in, more than most other creatures canine or human, I believe, being all of us, loyal and faithful, and still, in right old Tory fashion, 'putting our trust in Princes.' But *I* am ready at present to treat any friend as guide rather than myself, for I have been very thoroughly out of my wits for a while—such as I had. I hope, however, that they have been only what the Scots call 'wool-gathering,' and that I may even make a web some day of what they have gathered. I am as yet, however, quite unable to write the smallest part of what I would fain say in grave answer to this most kind and thoughtful letter with which your Royal Highness encourages me to hope that I may some day obtain your help—if I yet live—in things which, alike in sickness and health, seem to me appointed for my main work under St. George and his Princes and Knights. I hope you have had at least one morning of good light for Carpaccio's chapel. Forgive—what I must as yet fail in, of better expression—and believe the unexpressed thanks, with which I remain your Royal Highness's faithful and affectionate servant."

(*To MRS. JOHN SIMON.*) "BRANTWOOD, 15th May, '78.—The Splügen Pass—with all its mountains—was moved here by your faith in me and that of other dear friends, last night. I could be

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well content to go through a worse illness than that in which John and Dr. Parsons have carried me forth of the shade, to receive the tenth part of the witness it has won for me of manifold kindness which I had not before understood or conceived. But it *does* seem to me rather unfair that I should be so rewarded for being absurd ; and receive so many congratulations upon having tumbled down the stairs of my wits, which never were forthcoming when I kept my feet on them. I am, however, profoundly thankful both for the sweet gift, and that I have again eyes to see it,—for indeed, I am, as far as I can make out, quite myself again, and for the present *one* self only, and not one beside myself. I never understood the meaning of that phrase before, but indeed I was a double, or even treble, creature through great part of that dream. I am more solicitous to know what Master John, of 40 Kensington Sq., is about, than for my own future state just now. For indeed, my dear S., he had got his head fuller of contagion than ever mine was of religion. He is cured, I doubt not, of his notions of my ‘ angelic ’ character, but I do hope you will persuade him to be less enthusiastic on the subject of ‘ bacteria,’ or whatever the things are called in scientific terms, and insist on his taking *true* holiday this summer.”

To his friends at large, known and unknown, Ruskin wrote at the end of the revised Turner Notes that “the warning I have received amounts to a direct message from the Fates that the time has come for me to think no more of any Masterhood ; but only of the Second Childhood which has to learn its way towards the other world.” But reviving strength gave him hopes of working still while it was day ; and we shall see in later chapters with what fortitude Ruskin set himself to resume the threads of his busy life—counting his mercies, and seeking (as he wrote in his diary) to “try and turn every hour to gold.” He was one who ever

“Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### STUDIES OF FLOWERS AND ROCKS

“To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower;  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.”—WILLIAM BLAKE.

“I WANT ever so many things now from my rooms,” Ruskin wrote, on recovery, to a friend at Oxford (May 14, 1878); “I’m getting well into my plant-work again, and missals. I’m not overworking, and never will any more, but the doctors are all quite unable to make me out. My work is to *me* Air and Water, and they might just as well tell a sick fish to lie on its back, or a sick swallow to catch no flies, as me not to catch what’s in the air of passing fancy.”<sup>1</sup>

#### I

His flower-fancies pleased without exciting him. To his friend, F. S. Ellis, the bookseller, he wrote that the spring flowers were to be his models of behaviour—“they grow—and do—as they like exactly; which I perceive to be the intention of Providence that they—and I—*should*, and propose to follow their good example as I best can.” He was engaged in devising a new botanical nomenclature, and sought advice on some points of Greek word-formation:—

(To DEAN LIDDELL.) “Nov., 1878.—I am very thoroughly grateful for your kindness in looking over these proofs; and more than happy in your indulgence to them. I felt as if they might seem to you only a form of continuous fantasy remaining from my illness; nor do I myself look for the slightest effect upon the

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<sup>1</sup> “Recollections of Ruskin at Oxford, by ‘Peter,’” in *St. George*, vol. vi. p. 112.



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scientific world while I live; but if I do live a few years more the collation of what I have systematised for the first time in Art Education with what I had learned of natural science in pure love of it, and not in ambition of discovery, will form a code of school teaching entirely separate from the technical formalities of each several branch of science as now pursued, and which I believe many parents and children will thank me for."

*Proserpina*, the book which Ruskin then resumed, was published in Parts between 1875 and 1886. It collects the studies, thoughts, and fancies of a much longer period, though many of the kind are to be found also in *Modern Painters*, in the *Queen of the Air*, and in other of his books. "I begun my studies of Alpine botany," he says, "in 1842," and the sub-title of the book—*Studies of Wayside Flowers while the air was yet pure among the Alps and in the Scotland and England which my Father knew*—connects it with his earlier years. His thoughts in writing *Proserpina* were largely of the meadows of Clarens, of the *arbres de Judée* seen by many a French town; of the wild lilies-of-the-valley at St. Laurent, the gentians of the Jura, the tiger-lilies of the Simplon. In those earlier years, however, though Ruskin loved and painted the flowers, he collected no systematic material. At a later time he began to study them more intently. Nothing was too small or too common to attract the artist's eye in him. A passage or two in letters to his father from Savoy in 1862–63 may be given as characteristic of his way of studying flowers:—

"MORNEX, *September 16, 1862.*—I am much revived and pleased this morning by a crimson convolvulus and three nasturtiums on my white breakfast-table. I never saw before what a wonderful thing a nasturtium was, in the set of it on the stalk. . . . These four flowers give me more pleasure than I have in a whole greenhouse; first, because I have not in them more than I can attend to at a time; secondly, because they are fresh, pure, and with the natural cloud dew of morning on them."

"TALLOIRES, *April 18, 1863.*—If either Angelico or Leonardo were here just now, they would paint a foreground of periwinkles

It is quite new to me, the starry loveliness of this flower, in masses, mixed with ivy on grey rocks ; whole beds of it as large as the roof of our greenhouse, covering pieces of broken rock as large as the greenhouse itself. I noticed to-day for the first time the peculiar windmill form of the flower.”

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Whenever he was abroad in later years he studied and drew flowers. The Ruskin Art Collection at Oxford contains a large number of studies of common flowers and leaves which he made also at Brantwood, and many are engraved in *Proserpina*. Many a passage in the book tells, too, of his pleasure in the wild plants—the whortleberries, hyacinths, and other familiar flowers—that fill “the clefts and crest the ridges of his Brantwood rock.” Such studies occupied much of Ruskin’s quiet time during the years that followed his illness of 1878.

*Proserpina* is incomplete and fragmentary, and makes no pretensions to be authoritative. It was acutely said of Ruskin, as he himself records, that, when he wanted to learn a subject, he began to write a book upon it.<sup>1</sup> On the subject of botany he professed to be no more than a beginner; he set himself to ask questions, rather than to answer them. His classification was given “always as tentative”; he made no pretension to be a system-monger. But his artistic sense, as that of a master in the art of language, was offended by the barbarous nomenclature of the botanists. He resolutely refused to read about a fruit “dehiscing loculicidally,” and determined that his botany should have nothing to do with things pubescent-reticulate-venose-subreniform or ovate-acuminate-fimbrio-denticulate. He chaffed the botanists soundly in such matters—taunting them also not a little with the narrow limits of their knowledge. To say that the green of leaves is due to green-leaf, does not become a sufficient explanation merely by translating green-leaf into Greek. He ridiculed the passion for turning every term into Latin or Greek, and suggested that Greek botanists should repay the compliment by talking of *Insidebornides* and *Nutleafides*. He desired, in his school-book on flowers,

<sup>1</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. i. ch. i.

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to feed the feeling of wonder in the presence of the workings of a Spirit of Life. He saw in the flower the crown and rejoicing of that Spirit. "I am in the habit," he explains, "of thinking of the Greek Persephone, the Latin Proserpine, and the Gothic St. Ursula as of the same living spirit; and so far regulating my conduct by that idea as to dedicate my book on Botany to Proserpina."<sup>1</sup> It was the beauty of flowers that he meant to examine; he wanted to direct his readers to pretty instead of ugly mysteries; he put aside, as beyond his purpose, anything that involved the aid of the microscope. And he sought to associate the study of flowers—their modes of growth, their specialities of form and colour—with the place which they have held in the thoughts and fancies, the mythologies and the literature, the art and the religion of the civilised world. Flowers, sacred to Proserpine—flowers, sung by Shakespeare; flowers, celebrated in Greek poetry or chosen by the Hebrew prophets to point their morals; flowers, whose colours rival the purple of the Cæsars, or whose forms suggested types of architecture—these were the associations which Ruskin desired his scholars to have in mind when they plucked a wayside blossom or sat down to draw a leaf. Books of "floral fancies" are as a rule among the most vapid forms of literature. What distinguishes Ruskin's *Proserpina* is not only the originality of his own genius, but the interweaving of his play of fancy with exact observations of natural forms and the curiously wide and suggestive range of his associated ideas. A critic of Ruskin—herself a poet and a delicate observer—has noted as a wonderful "feat of illustration, allusion, and intricate history" the chapter in *Proserpina* on the poppy:—

"Ruskin's persevering eye saw the poppy confused with the grape by the Byzantine Greeks, and the poppy and the grape with palm fruit; saw the palm, in the stenography of design, pass into a nameless symmetrical ornament and thence into the Greek iris; saw it read by the Florentines, when they made Byzantine art their own, into their fleur-de-lys, with two poppy heads on each side of

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<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 88.

the entire foil in their finest heraldry; saw, on the other hand, the poppy altering the acanthus-leaf under the chisel of the Greek, until the northern worker of the twelfth century took the thistle-head for the poppy, and the thistle-leaf for the acanthus——”<sup>1</sup>

and so on, until from the poppy of our fields we reach Brunelleschi's dome. *Proserpina* is rich in such passages. The habit of associating one study with another was one of Ruskin's leading principles in education. *Proserpina* may, in one aspect of it, be described as a series of drawing-lessons in flowers. The reader was “to associate his study of botany, as indeed all other studies of visible things, with that of painting.” But it was also to be a grammar of botany for general students, as distinguished from scientific specialists. For such students he cared only to describe varieties which could easily be found, and to discuss qualities which were discoverable on the surface. His new system of classification and nomenclature was to be founded, first, on obvious (not latent) resemblances between plants; and, secondly, upon connexions with the thoughts and histories of men. His object was “to associate in our memory the flowers which truly resemble, or fondly companion, or, in time kept by the signs of Heaven, succeed, each other; and to name them in some historical connexion with the loveliest fancies and most helpful faiths of the ancestral world.” He did not carry his scheme very far, and sometimes himself forgot his own classification; also he retouched it as he went along. He hoped that young scholars would find it easier to learn the new names than he found it to forget the old ones. A new system is hardly likely to be adopted unless it be complete, and Ruskin's “grammar of botany” will remain for use in his “island of Barataria.” Yet, fragmentary as his essay in classification is, to many readers of *Proserpina* the common flowers of England and the Alps will receive some fresh significance from the pretty names which Ruskin's fancy found for them, as it played around their forms, their uses, and their associations. And few readers,

<sup>1</sup> *John Ruskin*, by Mrs. Meynell, pp. 254-255.



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I think, will say that the author does not fulfil in this book the promise which he made at the outset: namely, that it should at least be his own, and readable—readable alike for its original play of thought and fancy, and for its “honest English, of good Johnsonian lineage, touched here and there with colour of a little finer or Elizabethan quality.”

## II

Ruskin asserted for his studies in geology, partly collected in *Deucalion*, an authority which he did not claim for his botany. The work of *Proserpina* was, he said, “quite different from that of *Deucalion*, which is authoritative as far as it reaches, and will stand out like a quartz dyke, as the sandy speculations of modern gossiping geologists get washed away.”<sup>1</sup> His long and careful study of rocks and stones has been recorded in this biography, and it was a sore point with him that his contributions to geology and mineralogy attracted little attention, as compared with his writings on art, “though precisely the same faculties of eye and mind are concerned in the analysis of natural and of pictorial forms.”<sup>2</sup> But the world is in the habit of applying the formula, “One man, one subject.” To Ruskin it looked for criticisms of art and life, and descriptive writing, and did not care to consider him seriously as a geologist. Again, Ruskin in his writings on geology was in the habit, as he says, of “teaching by question, rather than by assertion”; his chapters were “sometimes little more than notes of interrogation.”<sup>3</sup> But the neglect of his geological writings may also be attributed to another cause. They were not considered, because they were little known. They were buried in back numbers, scattered in miscellaneous periodicals, or distributed among scarce pamphlets. To bring them together was the intention in *Deucalion*, to which he gave the sub-title *Collected Studies of the Lapse of Waves and Life*

<sup>1</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. ii. ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> *On Distinctions of Form in Silica*, §§ 3, 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Deucalion*, vol. ii. ch. ii.

of *Stones*. Some Parts had been issued (1875-76) before his illness; the rest of the book appeared at irregular intervals between 1878 and 1883. Though certain leading subjects of inquiry are pursued throughout the book, the arrangement, especially in the later chapters, is casual. He had so many irons in the fire, so many balls in the air, that he could not concentrate himself continuously on any one book, nor, within any one book, on any one subject. Even before his illness he pursued his various studies "as a kind of play, irregularly, and as the humour came upon him."<sup>1</sup> The various books which he had passing through the press in Parts at the same time were like drawers into which he flung whatever material happened to come to hand, sometimes with little regard to logical order or connexion: as may be seen in the sequence, or rather the inconsequence, of the chapters of *Deucalion*. Yet, though the order of the book is inconsequent, Ruskin was throughout it, as he says, making "advance in parallel columns." On four subjects of geological theory he claimed to have "shown the necessity for revisal of evidence, and, in two cases, for reversal of judgment." The four subjects are "denudation, cleavage, crystallisation, and elevation, as causes of mountain form." Cleavage and elevation are presumably the subjects on which he claimed to have shown the necessity for "revisal of evidence." It is a constant theme with him to question the statements ordinarily given. The subjects of denudation (or erosion by ice and water and other natural causes) and of crystallisation are those on which he claimed to have proved the necessity for reversal of judgment.

Ruskin's interest in Forbes's theory of glacier motion, and his eager advocacy of it, have already been noticed.<sup>2</sup> He was drawn back into the fray by the controversy which Tyndall's attacks upon Forbes excited; much of *Deucalion*, and some other pieces from Ruskin's pen, are occupied with the *affaire-Rendu-Forbes-Tyndall*. Ruskin's contributions to the discussion—in *Fors*, in *Deucalion*, and in

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 59 (Nov. 1875).

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 98.

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XXIV. marked, says Forbes's son, by “clearness, impartiality, acuteness, and exemplary firmness.” An onlooker need not take sides to enjoy Ruskin's keen thrusts, as, for instance, in his analysis of Tyndall's phrase “contact with facts” as expressive only of “occasional collision with him.” Ruskin's feeling in the matter, however, was not only caused by a desire to see justice done to Forbes; he deplored the jealousies about priority of discovery which too often disturb the scientific world, and by which in this particular matter Tyndall had, he thought, set back the glacier theory twenty years and more.<sup>1</sup>

A second question, with which many pages of *Deucalion* and of Ruskin's other geological writings are occupied, is also concerned with glacier theories. “Do Glaciers Excavate?” The question has excited as much controversy as the methods and nature of glacier motion. On this subject Ruskin claimed, not without considerable justice, to have been somewhat of a pioneer. The theory of the excavating power of glaciers received a strong impetus from the publication in 1862 of Sir Andrew Ramsay's paper “On the Glacial Origin of certain Lakes in Switzerland, the Black Forest, etc.”<sup>2</sup> His hypothesis was that certain lake basins have been scooped out by glaciers now melted away; and few scientific papers have ever excited more interest or more controversy. The theory was opposed by Murchison; but the idea that glaciers excavate received, and receives, much support, though, as Professor Bonney observes, “the hypothesis has not gathered its most ardent supporters from those with intimate personal knowledge of the Alps.”<sup>3</sup> Ruskin possessed such knowledge, and in 1863, in his lecture at the Royal Institution, he had argued that the action of ice had been greatly overrated, and protested that glaciers had no capacity of scooping out lake basins (see above, p. 59). In

<sup>1</sup> “A Conversation with Mr. Ruskin,” by M. H. Spielmann, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 21, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, 1862, vol. xviii. p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Geographical Journal*, June 1893, vol. i. p. 488.

the following year he again strongly combated Ramsay's theory, in letters to the press. He there lays it down that "ice has had small share in modifying even the higher ridges, and none in causing or forming the valleys"; and that "the idea of the excavation of valleys by ice has become one of quite ludicrous untenableness." He then passed to explanations of glacial motion and action in connexion with the viscous theory. He does not question the glacier's power of abrasion, but confines its sculptural power within narrow limits. In 1865, in papers contributed to the *Geological Magazine*, he returned to the charge, in a passage of ironical agreement, which has been quoted in later discussions of the subject.<sup>1</sup> In *Devotional*, he reiterates his conviction; for during his visit to Chamouni (1874) he found further confirmation of his views. "I was able," he says, "to cross the dry bed of a glacier, which I had seen flowing, two hundred feet deep, over the same spot, forty years ago; and there I saw, what before I had suspected, that modern glaciers, like modern rivers, were not cutting their beds deeper, but filling them up." Professor Bonney's observations a year later were, it is interesting to note, to the same general effect.<sup>2</sup>

As against those geologists who attributed sculptural force to erosion, Ruskin, then, constantly emphasised the importance of internal structure and original elevation. And so, again, as against the mechanical theory of cleavage and jointing, he held that the phenomena were akin rather both in aspects and origin to crystalline cleavage. This point brings me to Ruskin's mineralogy. His analysis of the structure of agates was, he claims, original work (see above, p. 145); and he was led by it to suggestions which seemed to him of far-reaching importance. Just as he found the undulated structure in minerals to be produced by crystallisation, not by compression or violence, so he surmised that, on a larger scale, contortions "may be a crystalline

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Henry Howorth's *The Glacial Nightmare*, 1893, vol. ii. p. 621.

<sup>2</sup> See *Geographical Journal*, June 1893, vol. i. p. 488.



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arrangement assumed under pressure, but assuredly not a form assumed by ductile substance under mechanical force." Cleavage and jointing were, he held, often "a result of crystallization under polar forces." The larger conclusions which Ruskin thus hinted are perhaps not likely to find favour with geologists. But in the matter of the formation of agates, it may well be considered an open question, I understand, whether formations, commonly ascribed to successive deposits, were not rather the result of contemporaneous segregation. Such were Ruskin's claims for his work in this field; the collection of his scattered contributions in a single volume (xxvi.) of the Library Edition will perhaps enable them to be better considered.

## III

Ruskin's general attitude to natural science is often misunderstood. He was not so ignorant or narrow-minded as to suppose that there was no proper place for the science which classifies and analyses, in accord with, or in the effort to discover, origins and essences; which has an equal eye for all kinds of facts—for hidden aspects, latent processes, ultimate causes, as well as for phenomena on the surface. His attitude was simply that this was a kind of science which for the most part did not interest him, and which he never pretended to study, but that there was another kind of science which, for purposes of general education, he held to be more important, which appealed to him as a lover of the beautiful in art and nature, and in which he could claim to give some light and leading. Here, for instance, is a passage from *Fors Clavigera* describing what he would, and would not, desire to find in a book about bees for a school-girl:—

"I don't in the least want a book to tell her how many species of bees there are; nor what grounds there may be for suspecting that one species is another species; nor why Mr. B is convinced that what Mr. A considered two species are indeed one species; nor how conclusively Mr. C has proved that what Mr. B described

as a new species is an old species. Neither do I want a book to tell her what a bee's inside is like, nor whether it has its brains in the small of its back, or nowhere in particular, like a modern political economist; nor whether the morphological nature of the sternal portion of the thorax should induce us, strictly, to call it the prosternum, or may ultimately be found to present no serious inducement of that nature. But I want a book to tell her, for instance, how a bee buzzes; and how, and by what instrumental touch, its angry buzz differs from its pleased or simply busy buzz. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

and so on. His attitude to some branches of the science of botany was the same. He had no patience with "nasty" carnivorous plants; and "when we are told that the leaves of a plant are occupied in decomposing carbonic acid, or preparing oxygen for us, we begin to look upon it with some such indifference as upon a gasometer." <sup>2</sup> All such researches offended Ruskin's artistic sense; he did not deny their importance; he passed them by as "ugly mysteries" into which he had no desire to pry. He was similarly uninterested in the artificial cultivation and cross-breeding of plants; he left the "cur-breeding florists" severely alone; the swollen varieties were coarse alike in outline and in colour as compared with the simpler flowers. His studies of birds were on the same lines. The poetry of the title of his book *Love's Meinie* is significant. He asked his pupils to work at birds and to love them, rather than to dissect them; to study their colours, their motions, their habits, rather than their anatomy; to study them alive and as they are, not dead and as they may once have been. This was his standpoint towards natural history generally. His was "popular science," and science for artists; a science primarily of aspects, not the science of essences and origins. His ambition was to formulate simple grammars of ornithology, botany, and mineralogy, which should familiarise young students "quickly and easily with the general aspects" <sup>3</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> Letter 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Catalogue of Minerals arranged by Professor Ruskin for the Museum of Kirkcudbright.*

CHAP. natural objects, and at the same time connect the study  
XXIV. with art and literature.<sup>1</sup> And similarly, in geology, though here his deeper study led him also into the fields of theory and speculation, he was yet little interested in unknown ages and immeasurable forces. And so, in *Deucalion*, he defines "our own work" as beginning where all theory ceases, and as being the study of forms which have "actually stood since man was man." To a geological friend who had sent him a learned paper,<sup>2</sup> he wrote:—

(To ALFRED TYLOR.) "(1875.)—I am grateful to you for sending me the binomial curve and the Glaciers on Mount Sinai—but it's all much too grand and far away back for me. I don't care three farthings what happened when Mount Sinai was under ice. I want to know how long the Staubbach has been falling where it is in the Valley of Lauterbrunnen, and why it hasn't cut itself further back? There's a mere nutshell of a question for you geologists. You ought to crack it for me as easily as a squirrel does a beech-nut, and give me my question out of the shell. But I can't get anybody ever to answer about what I want to know."

The bent of Ruskin's mind, in all such studies, was severely practical.<sup>3</sup> He turned away from theory, conjecture, speculation, to what could certainly be known, seen, drawn, measured. What he claimed for his own writings on mountain form is that they are of observation, experiment, and verification all compact. What he wrote was founded not on what he had read in books, but on his own "watchings of the Alps"; he "closed all geological books," and set himself "to see the Alps in a simple, thoughtless, and untheorising manner, but to see them, if it might be, thoroughly."<sup>4</sup> His descriptions of mountain form in *Modern Painters* are accounted by geologists the most important of his contributions, or aids, to their science. "We must not forget his services to our science," said a President of the Geological Society in an

<sup>1</sup> *Readings in "Modern Painters,"*  
§ 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Geological Magazine*, N.S., 1875,  
vol. ii. p. 433.

<sup>3</sup> See *Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. vii.

<sup>4</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. appendix ii.

obituary notice of Ruskin, "in directing the attention of artists and others to the effect of geological structure, and of the characters of rocks, on scenery"; and the speaker added that the chapters in *Modern Painters* "might be read with advantage by many geologists."<sup>1</sup>

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#### IV

Ruskin, then, was artist, rather than man of "science." Art deals with aspects, it may be said, science with essences. Yet this is a narrowing of the word science. There may be a science of aspects, as well as a science of essences; a science of form, as well as a science of force. One set of phenomena may be as deserving of "scientific" study as the other. The chemists analyse plants, and tell us how they are composed, and that is very interesting, but it does not explain why we are pleased by the rose rather than by the deadly nightshade. The philosophers tell us that there is as much heat, or motion, or calorific energy in a tea-kettle as in a Gier-eagle:—

"Very good; that is so; and it is very interesting. It requires just as much heat as will boil the kettle, to take the Gier-eagle up to his nest; and as much more to bring him down again on a hare or a partridge. But we painters, acknowledging the equality and similarity of the kettle and the bird in all scientific respects, attach, for our part, our principal interest to the difference in their forms. For us, the primarily cognisable facts, in the two things, are, that the kettle has a spout, and the eagle a beak; the one a lid on its back, the other a pair of wings;—not to speak of the distinction also of volition, which the philosophers may properly call merely a form or mode of force; but then, to an artist, the form, or mode, is the gist of the business."<sup>2</sup>

The men of science have their theories of the origin and intermutability of species; but such theories have no bearing

<sup>1</sup> Address by William Whitaker, F.R.S., May 1900: *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, vol. 56, pp. lx., lxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethics of the Dust*, § 107.



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“It is perfectly possible, and ultimately conceivable, that the crocodile and the lamb may have descended from the same ancestral atom of protoplasm; and that the physical laws of the operation of calcareous slime and of meadow grass, on that protoplasm, may in time have developed the opposite natures and aspects of the living frames; but the practically important fact for us is the existence of a power which creates that calcareous earth itself;—which creates that, separately, and quartz, separately, and gold, separately, and charcoal, separately; and then so directs the relations of these elements that the gold may destroy the souls of men by being yellow; and the charcoal destroy their souls by being hard and bright; and the quartz represent to them an ideal purity; and the calcareous earth, soft, may beget crocodiles, and dry and hard, sheep; and that the aspects and qualities of these two products, crocodiles and lambs, may be, the one repellent to the spirit of man, the other attractive to it, in a quite inevitable way, representing to him states of moral evil and good, and becoming myths to him of destruction or redemption, and, in the most literal sense, ‘Words’ of God.”<sup>1</sup>

“What outstretched sign of constant Omnipotence can be more awful, than that the susceptibility to external influences, with the reciprocal power of transformation, in the organs of the plant; and the infinite powers of moral training and mental conception over the nativity of animals, should be so restrained within impassable limits, and by inconceivable laws, that from generation to generation, under all the clouds and revolutions of heaven with its stars, and among all the calamities and convulsions of the Earth with her passions, the numbers and the names of her Kindred may still be counted for her in unfailing truth;—still the fifth sweet leaf unfold for the Rose, and the sixth spring for the Lily; and yet the wolf rave tameless round the folds of the pastoral mountains, and yet the tiger flame through the forests of the night!”<sup>2</sup>

But is there any science of aspects? Not all men, it may be

<sup>1</sup> *Queen of the Air*, § 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. i. ch. xi.

said, are equally susceptible to them. No, they are not. And not all animals either:—

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“The serpent will keep its eyes fixed on you for an hour together, a vertical slit in each admitting such image of you as is possible to the rattlesnake retina, and to the rattlesnake mind. How much of a man can a snake see? What sort of image of him is received through that deadly vertical cleft in the iris;—through the glazed blue of the ghastly lens? . . . Or, if that seem too far beneath possible inquiry, how say you of a tiger’s eye, or a cat’s? A cat may look at a king;—yes; but can it *see* a king when it looks at him? The beasts of prey never seem to me to *look*, in our sense, at all. Their eyes are fascinated by the motion of anything, as a kitten’s by a ball;—they fasten, as if drawn by an inevitable attraction, on their food. But when a cat caresses you, it never looks at you. Its heart seems to be in its back and paws, not its eyes. It will rub itself against you, or pat you with velvet tufts, instead of talons; but you may talk to it an hour together, yet not rightly catch its eye. Ascend higher in the races of being—to the fawn, the dog, the horse; you will find that, according to the clearness of sight, is indeed the kindness of sight, and that at last the noble eyes of humanity look through humanity, from heart into heart, and with no mechanical vision. And the Light of the body is the eye—yes, and in happy life, the light of the heart also.”<sup>1</sup>

The glory of the higher creatures is in ignorance of what is known to the lower. The higher the creature, the nobler are its conceptions in range and dignity:—

“Doth the Eagle know what is in the pit,  
Or wilt thou go ask the mole?”

Sight is a spiritual power, and those see most nobly who believe in a Power greater than their own. The belief may be incapable of intellectual proof; but Ruskin bridges the chasm by an appeal to experience:—

“The sum of all is, that over the entire surface of the earth and its waters, as influenced by the power of the air under solar light,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Eagle’s Nest*, §§ 109, 110.

CHAP. there is developed a series of changing forms, in clouds, plants,  
XXIV. and animals, all of which have reference in their action, or nature, to the human intelligence that perceives them; and on which, in their aspects of horror and beauty, and their qualities of good and evil, there is engraved a series of myths, or words of the forming power, which, according to the true passion and energy of the human race, they have been enabled to read into religion. And this forming power has been by all nations partly confused with the breath or air through which it acts, and partly understood as a creative wisdom, proceeding from the Supreme Deity; but entering into and inspiring all intelligences that work in harmony with Him. And whatever intellectual results may be in modern days obtained by regarding this effluence only as a motion or vibration, every formative human art hitherto, and the best states of human happiness and order, have depended on the apprehension of its mystery (which is certain), and of its personality (which is probable)."<sup>1</sup>

Such were the convictions which Ruskin expressed in books of 1866, 1869, 1872, and if a reader cares to turn back to an earlier chapter of this biography,<sup>2</sup> he will see how the same ideas are implied in the theory of beauty given in the second volume of *Modern Painters*. He had been brought by the study and the thought of thirty years to see in the ideas of his youth a deeper foundation and a fuller significance than he had imagined. In the Oxford lectures of 1877 on *Modern Painters* he said that on looking back he found that though all its Turner work was right and good, the essential business of the book was quite beyond that, and one he had never thought of. "I had been as a faithful scribe, writing words I knew not the force of or final intent. I find now the main value of the book to be exactly in that systematic scheme of it which I had despised, and in the very adoption and insistence upon the Greek term *Theoria*, instead of sight or perception, in which I had thought myself perhaps uselessly or affectedly refined."

<sup>1</sup> *Queen of the Air*, § 89.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 201.

And so, as he wrote in one of the later chapters of *Deucalion* (1883):—

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“I am republishing the second volume of *Modern Painters*, which, though in affected language, yet with sincere and very deep feeling, expresses the first and foundational law respecting human contemplation of the natural phenomena under whose influence we exist,—that they can only be seen with their properly belonging joy, and interpreted up to the measure of proper human intelligence, when they are accepted as the work, and the gift, of a Living Spirit greater than our own.

“Similarly, the moral philosophy which underlies all the appeals, and all the accusations, made in the course of my writings on political science, assumes throughout that the principles of Justice and Mercy which are fastened in the hearts of men, are also expressed in entirely consistent terms throughout the higher—(and even the inferior, when undefiled)—forms of all lovely literature and art; and enforced by the Providence of a Ruling and Judging Spiritual Power, manifest to those who desire its manifestation, and concealed from those who desire its concealment.

“These two Faiths, in the creating Spirit, as the source of Beauty,—in the governing Spirit, as the founder and maintainer of Moral law, are *assumed* as the basis of all exposition and of all counsel, which have ever been attempted or offered in my books.”



## CHAPTER XXV

### RETURN TO WORK

(1878-1880)

"Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito."—VIRGIL.

By July 1878 Ruskin was able to report himself as "having got into quiet work again," and he was not without hope of recovering strength enough to resume the duties of his Oxford Professorship. The quiet work consisted largely of the studies of rocks and flowers, described in the last chapter; but presently he felt himself able for a more general resumption of his activities.

#### I

In August he went with Mr. Arthur Severn to sketch at Malham, and presently he was well enough to pay some visits. In September he was in Scotland staying at Dunira with Mr. William Graham and his daughter (the "F" or "Francie" of familiar letters of Burne-Jones and Ruskin), and afterwards he was invited to go to Hawarden, where the Duke of Argyll was to be of the party. The visit to Dunira is recorded in two pleasant papers which Ruskin contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* (Nov., Dec. 1878), entitled *The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism*. He had found in the house the "Ecce Ancilla Domini" of Rossetti, the "Blind Girl" of Millais, and a drawing called "The King's Bridal" by Burne-Jones. They suggested to him an analysis of three different aspects of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The visit to Hawarden was a success, and one of the party made a study of "three strongly-contrasted characters." The Duke found things very well

as they are. Ruskin was for remoulding "this sorry scheme of things nearer to the heart's desire." Ruskin was against war; he "would have every man in England a soldier—able, if need be, to defend his home and his country; but not a standing profession of fighters, which must encourage the evil war-spirit." Ruskin maintained that Christianity was against war; the Duke cited a sermon of Mozley's to the contrary. "You seem to want a very different world, Mr. Ruskin." "Yea, verily, a new heaven and a new earth, and the former things passed away." Midway between the two stood Gladstone; "in spirit going far with Ruskin; accepting, indeed, almost all his principles, but widely differing as to their practical applications." At one point they turned out to be in unexpected accord. Ruskin had attacked his host as a "leveller":—

"'You see *you* think one man is as good as another, and all men equally competent to judge aright on political questions; whereas I am a believer in an aristocracy.' And straight came the answer from Mr. Gladstone, 'Oh dear, no! I am nothing of the sort. I am a firm believer in the aristocratic principle—the rule of the best. I am an out-and-out *inequalitarian*,' a confession which Ruskin greeted with intense delight, clapping his hands triumphantly."

There was play, as well as talk. Some one produced "Fishponds," and Gladstone, the Duke, and Ruskin took their turn. "Ruskin approved the idea of the game, but wanted lovely little fishes with scales—instead of little ugly lumps of wood—to catch."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's conversation pleased Mr. Gladstone no less than before. "No diminution of charm," Mr. Gladstone wrote in his diary of him; and again: "Mr. Ruskin developed his political opinions. They aim at the restoration of the Judaic system, and exhibit a mixture of virtuous absolutism and Christian socialism. All in his charming and modest manner."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to M. G. and H. G.*,  
p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Morley's Life of Gladstone*, vol.  
ii. p. 582.

## II

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On returning to Brantwood, Ruskin had to consider his defence in the libel action brought by Whistler. Ruskin's *critique* had appeared in July 1877, and it was at once reported that Whistler intended to bring an action. Ruskin had been delighted at the prospect. "It's mere nuts and nectar to me," he wrote to Burne-Jones, "the notion of having to answer for myself in court, and the whole thing will enable me to assert some principles of art economy which I've never got into the public's head, by writing, but may get sent over all the world vividly in a newspaper report or two." But this was not to be. The action was not brought immediately; Ruskin's serious illness intervened, and when the case was ready for trial his doctors forbade him to risk the excitement of appearing in person. Whistler had exhibited seven works at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, and Ruskin's criticism was general, but was given a certain specific application by the remark that he had "never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." One of the pictures in question—the "Nocturne in Blue and Silver (Battersea Bridge)"—is now in the Tate Gallery, having been presented to the nation by the Art Collections Fund in 1905. It is often said that this is the picture which Ruskin attacked, but the statement is somewhat misleading. Several pictures were, indeed, included in the critical indictment, but the one which in fact aroused Ruskin's ire was the "Nocturne in Black and Gold (The Falling Rocket)"—the only one of the four Nocturnes then for sale—"a night piece," Whistler called it at the trial, "representing the fireworks at Cremorne." This, too, was the picture which Ruskin's principal witness, Burne-Jones, singled out as justifying the criticisms.

The case, which was tried before Baron Huddleston in November 1878, excited lively interest in artistic circles; and rival experts were called. Perhaps it is true of painters, as Wordsworth said of poets, that innovators have to create

the taste by which they are to be admired. Whistler produced his Nocturnes in court; the defence produced from Ruskin's collection Titian's portrait of the Doge Andrea Gritti, to show what is meant by sound workmanship. In the end the jury found for the plaintiff, but awarded only one farthing damages—a verdict which implied that in their opinion Ruskin was technically in the wrong, but that substantially his remarks were fair criticism. The trial called forth a bitter, but not unamusing, brochure by Whistler, entitled *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics*, afterwards included in his book *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. But better than anything in Whistler's pamphlet was a remark which he made when under cross-examination. "Can you tell me," asked the Attorney-General (Sir John Holker), "how long it took you to knock off that Nocturne?" "Two days." "The labour of two days, then, is that for which you ask two hundred guineas?" "No; I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime." Burne-Jones, who was Ruskin's principal witness, had been placed in a position of much delicacy and difficulty. Whistler was also his friend, and the passage in *Fors*, which formed the subject of the action, was practically a comparison between Whistler's work and his own. He felt strongly, however, that Ruskin was justified in asserting that good workmanship was essential to a good picture, and in finding this quality absent from the picture in question. Ruskin's letters show how much he relied on Burne-Jones:—

"BRANTWOOD, November 28.—I'm very grateful to you for speaking up, and Arthur [Severn] says you looked so serene and dignified that it was a sight to see. I don't think you will be sorry hereafter that you stood by me, and I shall be evermore happier in my serene sense of your truth to me, and to good causes—for there *was* more difficulty in your appearing than in any one else's, and I'm so glad you looked nice and spoke so steadily."

The result of the trial gave satisfaction to neither side. The damages awarded to Whistler were contemptuous; and the judge had not given the plaintiff costs. Each side was thus left to pay its own, and Ruskin found himself mulcted



CHAP. in a sum of £400 as the price of his criticism, which, whether  
XXV. sound or mistaken, was at any rate disinterested. Friends and admirers subscribed this sum, and sent it to Ruskin with an "expression of their opinion that your life-long, honest endeavours to further the cause of art should not be crowned by your being cast in the costs arising out of that action." Ruskin acknowledged the gift gratefully, but the result of the trial rankled in his mind, and letters to Dean Liddell show this was the cause which finally decided him to resign his Professorship at Oxford:—

"BRANTWOOD, *November 28, 1878.*—Although my health has been lately much broken, I hesitated in giving in my resignation of my Art-Professorship in the hope that I might still in some imperfect way have been useful at Oxford. But the result of the Whistler trial leaves me no further option. I cannot hold a Chair from which I have no power of expressing judgment without being taxed for it by British Law. I do not know in what formal manner my resignation should be signified, but thought it best that the decisive intimation of it should be at once placed in your hands."

Early in the following year, Ruskin was troubled with other legal proceedings. His name had been forged on various cheques, and he was called to London as a witness for the prosecution. "Being in very weak health," says the report of the proceedings, "Mr. Ruskin was allowed to give evidence from the bench."<sup>1</sup> It was characteristic that when the prisoner had completed his sentence Ruskin gave him the means to start again in a better career.

### III

The greater part of 1879 and the early months of 1880 were spent quietly at Brantwood, with occasional visits to London, Canterbury, Broadlands, and Sheffield. At Broadlands spiritualistic experiments were again made; but "the only *definite* thing I felt this time," wrote Ruskin in reply to Prince Leopold's inquiries (Oct. '79), "was a quiet natural

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, April 1, 1879.

guidance (in all ways) in right directions." Various works interrupted by his illness were now resumed, and return of strength came as a call to renewed testimony of the faith that was in him. One of his first tasks in 1879 was the conclusion of *The Laws of Fésole*, and there he wrote:—

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"Counting less than most men what future days may bring or deny to me, I am thankful to be permitted, in the beginning of a New Year of which I once little thought to see the light, to repeat, with all the force of which my mind is yet capable, the lesson I have endeavoured to teach through my past life, that this fair Tree Igdrasil of Human Art can only flourish when its dew is Affection; its air, Devotion; the rock of its roots, Patience; and its sunshine, God."

He issued the concluding part of *St. Mark's Rest* and the first volume of the Travellers' Edition of the *Stones of Venice*. He started a second volume of *Proserpina*. He was rearranging the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* for a new edition which appeared in the following year. He allowed himself to be drawn into a field of exciting discussion, in a series (June–Sept. 1879) of *Letters on the Lord's Prayer* in relation to the duties of the clergy and to present-day problems. He was persuaded to write these Letters for Mr. Malleon, the vicar of Broughton-in-Furness, to read at meetings of the local clerical society. The persuasion was somewhat against his will, but he had a keen sense of the obligation of friendly neighbourliness. He had other tasks in hand which did not come to publication. He was now making steady progress with a translation of Plato's *Laws*, and another book which he had in his mind was to deal with Horace. "In reading Horace at breakfast," he notes (March 7, 1879), "planned the form in which to gather my work on him, to be called either *Mella Matini* or *Exacta Vulturni*, but I think the first." What form the book of Horatian studies was to take, the diaries do not show. They contain, however, occasional notes on lines or phrases, and in one of them there is a list of English titles for all the Odes.

There was also much work to do in connexion with

CHAP. St. George's Guild and Museum. He wrote a first Report  
XXV. as Master; he worked at catalogues; and in October he had the pleasure of receiving Prince Leopold at the Museum.<sup>1</sup> He wrestled also with the Accounts of the Guild. This *Financial History of St. George's Guild*, written in March 1879, is among the rarest and most curious of Ruskin's pamphlets: a "not, I hope, unentertaining history," he called it, "of the Don Quixote of Denmark Hill."

At Brantwood Ruskin received many friends, among whom was Darwin. The two men were in some respects not sympathetic. Ruskin could not feel interested in the insectivorous habits of plants, and Darwin could see nothing to admire in Turner's drawings. One strong bond of sympathy they had, however, in love of the lake-country.<sup>2</sup> Darwin frequently spent his holidays in the lake-country, and when staying at Coniston would dine occasionally at Brantwood. Ruskin had young artists to stay with him—Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Creswick among the number—and took pleasure in giving them encouragement. His private secretary at this time was Laurence Hilliard, "the cleverest and neatest-fingered boy," says a companion, "that ever rigged a model";<sup>3</sup> and one of Ruskin's diversions was the designing of his little craft, the *Jumping Jenny*:—

(To C. E. NORTON.) "BRANTWOOD, *Easter Monday*.—We launched my own first boat on Saturday—larch-built as thoroughly as boat can be—with a narrow stern seat, for one only, and a Lago di Garda bow. I had a nice pretty niece of Joanie's to christen her for me—the *Jumping Jenny* (*Ste. Geneviève* on the sly, you know)—and the following benediction was spoken over her:—

'Waves give place to thee,	And Fortune to ferry
Heaven send grace to thee,	Kind folk, and merry.'

She's my first essay in marine architecture, and the boat-builders far and near approve!"

She was Ruskin's own particular boat, and he had much

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 349.

<sup>3</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *Ruskin*

<sup>2</sup> See *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. i. p. 129. *Relics*, p. 22.

pleasure in rowing her. In winter, when the lake was frozen, he was fond of sliding, and he records in *Deucalion* his close observation of phenomena of snow and ice. As soon as the spring and summer came he was busy in noting the first appearance of his favourite flowers, in searching for perfect blossoms, in painting studies of them. "Paradisiacal walk with Joanie and the children," he notes in his diary (May 2, 1880), "among the anemones." "Room in *perfect* order," he says again (July 2), "and I wonderfully well. Joanie home quite well, and children happy—*D.G.*—and sun on fells, and a cranberry blossom in my saucer ready to be drawn. Found them yesterday, in breezy afternoon, on the hill, all sparkling like little rubies." There was always a saucer, ready for such use, on his drawing-table. He was ever discovering a new beauty, unseen before. "Studied dew on Sweet William yesterday morning," he writes (August 11); "the divine crimson lighted by the fire of each minute lens. I never noticed this before—blind bat!" He interested himself greatly in the village school, planning lessons, arranging pictures, and giving treats. He would sometimes deliver little addresses to his friends and neighbours on these occasions. At this time he used also to conduct family-prayers at Brantwood. Perhaps it was because he regarded himself as "a member of the Third Order of St. Francis" <sup>1</sup> that he liked even the domestic animals of the family to be present. He prepared notes for Bible-readings, and wrote prayers for these occasions. He was a lover both of cats and of dogs. The stories of successive reigning favourites among his dogs were to have formed the subject of a supplementary chapter in his autobiography; "of my cats," he wrote in a piece of unused manuscript for the same book, "I fear there will be no space to say all they deserve; but they are meant to be connected with the expression of my loving respect for the poet Gray, and the story of the Cat's Cradle in *Redgauntlet*."

That extract above, "Room in perfect order," is characteristic. "Setting my rooms in order," he said, "has, throughout life, been an occasionally complacent recreation

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 255.



CHAP. to me; but I have never succeeded in keeping them in  
XXV. order three days after they were in it.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone shared Ruskin’s pleasure in putting things to order. “After 30 hours,” he wrote, in 1878, “my library is now in a passable state, and I enjoy in Ruskin’s words ‘the complacency of possession and the pleasantness of order.’”<sup>2</sup> “Study like a Carpaccio background to St. Jerome,” Ruskin notes with satisfaction (Feb. 10, 1880); but the study was a workroom, and as its master was in the habit of working at a dozen different subjects on as many successive days, the books, portfolios, pictures, and note-books were quickly overlaid. Like many other book-buyers, he was in the habit from time to time of weeding out his library, and many a volume found its way to the auction-rooms containing his autograph or book-plate and a note of his reason for disposing of it. The arrangement, and re-arrangement, of the drawings by Turner chosen for his bedroom was another recreation; there are pages of his diary, filled with notes and diagrams for different schemes. Such were his diversions. He records with pride, as in the exercise of a rare virtue, that he sometimes tried to be “as lazy as possible”; but his eyes and mind were ever active, and such entries in his diary are quickly followed by notes of “crowding thoughts” and “unnumbered sights of lovely things.”

## IV

In the autumn of 1879 Ruskin came up from Brantwood to Herne Hill. His principal purpose was to write the *Notes on Prout and Hunt* to illustrate a Loan Collection of Drawings, in part arranged by him, at the Fine Art Society’s Galleries in the winter of 1879–80. A reader, comparing these Notes with those of the previous year on the Turner Drawings, will be struck at once by the greater quietness of tone and more systematic treatment which characterise the later of the two catalogues. Calm

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 70.

<sup>2</sup> Morley’s *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii, p. 58.

had succeeded to storm; and there was perhaps something in the modest art of Samuel Prout and William Hunt, and in the happy recollections which it prompted, that induced in the author a mood of greater equanimity. In the *Notes on Prout and Hunt* there is something of the limpid ease of mind and style which characterises *Præterita*. In the same pleasant vein are the letters on *A Museum or Picture Gallery* which he wrote during March and April (1880) for *The Art Journal*. During his visit to London Ruskin went to the play and gave sittings for his portrait:—

(To MISS SARA ANDERSON.) “[HERNE HILL] 1st Dec., ’79.—I’ve been quite a prisoner to Mr. Herkomer—who has, however, made a perfectly beautiful drawing of me—the first that has ever given what good may be gleaned out of the clods of my face;—and before that, I had to go over to Kensington every day to Boehm, who is doing a yet more *like* thing in clay,—but I think my eyes are a loss in that. And I’m very well (you ask that for postscript in the last letter but one)—and amusing myself! I went to see Mr. Irving last Friday in *Shylock*, and the *Doge of Venice*—as I heard afterwards—told all the Senators that I was there—and Irving sent to ask me to come round after his final discomfiture;—and so I went—and made him a pretty little speech—and have written to him yesterday (Sunday) to ask him to make *Portia* cast down her eyes when she tells *Bassanio* what she’s good for.”

The portrait by Herkomer is now in the National Portrait Gallery. Versions of Boehm’s portrait-bust are there and at Oxford.

It had been well for Ruskin’s health if he could have husbanded all his gradually recovered strength for the studies which brought him peace of mind. His friends, as he says in *Fors*,<sup>1</sup> often counselled him to avoid controversial and painful subjects. Cardinal Manning, for one, had written to him: “Joy is one of the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost. There is before you and about you a world of beauty, sweetness, stillness, peace, and light. You have only to open your whole soul to it.” But his eager

<sup>1</sup> Letter 72.

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spirit made such peaceful preoccupation and such economy of power impossible to him. He was bent upon the chace, "jealous," as he notes in the diary (March 13, 1879), "of every golden minute of every golden day." At every new trial the words of the Sibyl were for ever murmured in his ears,<sup>1</sup> and whenever some new strength was gained, he heard in it a call to action. "Much better this morning," he notes in the diary (Feb. 28, 1879); "more in my heart than I can write, except that I got two oracles from Horace in the night. 'Fortem memento,' I remembered naturally enough; but 'Mors et fugacem persequitur virum' being opened at decided me to go to London to-morrow." Ruskin characteristically forgot that the word in the first line was *aequam*, not *fortem*. The diary contains frequent calls of the kind—as, for instance, this:—

"(January 2, 1880.)—Utterly jaded and feverish with nearly sleepless night and crowding thoughts—wonderful in sudden call upon me for action and I so feeble, but must answer a little. Thankful for the clear guiding—see the new *Fors* begun yesterday."

He thus resumed *Fors Clavigera* in February 1880, the Letter being chiefly concerned with the Housing of the Poor. Later in the year he had another Letter ready. "I've just sealed in its envelope for post," he wrote to Miss Beever (Sept. 18), "the most important *Fors* I have yet written, addressed to the Trades Unions, and their committees are to have as many copies as they like free, for distribution, free (dainty packets of Dynamite)." At the same time, in further answer to the "Call," Ruskin plunged into violent controversy upon a subject which of all excited him the most: he wrote in eager haste, yet not without careful revision, his Rejoinder to the Bishop of Manchester's reply in defence of "Usury."<sup>2</sup> This paper, entitled *Usury: a Reply and a Rejoinder*, appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for February 1880. Ruskin had by this time embraced the doctrine that all lending at interest was wrongful and to be condemned as "usury"; and in *Fors Clavigera* he had challenged the Bishops, and especially

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> See on this point, below, p. 486.

the Bishop of Manchester, as a commercial diocese, on the subject. In the Epilogue to the *Letters to the Clergy*, published in the *Contemporary* for December 1879, Ruskin had incidentally referred to the challenges. The Bishop, Dr. Fraser, heard of it for the first time on taking up the *Contemporary Review*. He forthwith addressed a Reply to Ruskin, who published it in the *Review*, with a Rejoinder on his own part. There the matter rested. The Bishop did not retort; the Rejoinder, he wrote to his friend Archdeacon Norris, seemed to him the "ravings of a lunatic";<sup>1</sup> but the Bishop would have done better, I think, in explaining his reason for leaving Ruskin alone, to have taken the line which Leslie Stephen tells us that Fawcett adopted in a like case. There was "an utter absence of any common ground," and the argument could therefore only have been "at cross purposes."<sup>2</sup> Ruskin's Rejoinder in the present instance is fairly open to criticism as being somewhat stilted; but raving or incoherent, it certainly is not. It was the premises which the Bishop had to destroy, and this was a task which would perhaps have presented some inconvenience. For the position to which Ruskin sought to pin down his antagonist, and from which the argument proceeds with ruthless exactitude, is the condemnation of "usury" by the text of the Bible and by the authority of learned divines. The Rejoinder was written, if hotly, yet not with haste. On the contrary, Ruskin took a certain malicious glee in polishing his points. "I'm very nearly done," he wrote to Miss Beever, "with toasting my bishop; he just wants another turn or two, and then a little butter."

In March 1880 Ruskin delivered with great verve a lecture at the London Institution, and it had to be repeated a week later. The lecture was called "A Caution to Snakes," and was afterwards made to serve as a chapter in *Deucalion*, though it contained nothing about geology or mineralogy—a serpentine method of ordering his materials which was not very fully covered by altering the title to "Living Waves." He had for many years made a study

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Bishop Fraser*, by Thomas Hughes, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Henry Fawcett*, p. 136.



CHAP. XXV. of the colours and movements of Snakes; some of his drawings may be seen at Oxford. The occasion of the lecture was, however, accidental. He had happened to hear an address by Huxley on the same subject, which had at once profoundly interested and challenged him. His own lecture on Snakes "became, apparently," says Ruskin, "rather a piece of badinage suggested by Professor Huxley's than a serious complementary statement." As a piece of playful and graceful banter, the chapter is one of Ruskin's happiest and most harmonious pieces; but "nothing," he says, "could have been more seriously intended." It gave his "spiritual version of the development of species," as supplementary to Huxley's discourse on the physical evolution of the snake. Of the impression made by the lecture at the time of its delivery, a note has been written by Mr. Wedmore:—

"I remember well his advent—the door opening at the bottom of the theatre—and, with William Morris, I think, and certainly Frederic Leighton and other friends, and patting Leighton on the back (or was it William Morris?) a little nervously, yet bearing himself bravely, the observed of observers, this man of world-wide fame, and, what is so much more impressive and important to those who feel it at all, of extraordinary and magnetic genius—this genius was suddenly amongst us. All listened intently; and as the theme developed, and his interest in it gained, and as he felt—for he must have felt—that he held us in the hollow of his hand—the fascination increased, and the power and beauty that justified it. I have heard, with great delight, another impressive genius—Tennyson—read some of his poems. The enjoyment was singular; the experience remarkable. But, in the drawing-room in Manchester Square, the author of 'The Revenge; a Ballad of the Fleet' reached no effect that was quite so much of an enchantment as did John Ruskin, with his voice more and more wonderful and tender, that March afternoon in Finsbury."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing is more striking in Ruskin's writings of this period than the contrast between the easy serenity of style

<sup>1</sup> "A Note on Ruskin," in the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, March 1900.

in the essays on subjects of art or nature and the fulgurant, and at times somewhat ill-balanced, vehemence in those on politics or economics. If a reader will glance in succession at two pieces, written within a few weeks of each other—the *Notes on Prout and Hunt* and the Rejoinder to the Bishop of Manchester—he will at once perceive the contrast. Other work which excited Ruskin's brain at this time was the series of essays—brilliantly penetrating, if over-discursive—upon Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron which he contributed, under the title *Fiction, Fair and Foul*, to the *Nineteenth Century*. They are among his best literary essays, and their polished allusiveness shows a mind and a memory in fullest activity. "I always get into heart again," he says in the diary, in noting his first plan for the papers (April 13, 1880), "when I see my way well into a thing." But the strain was great. "Scott papers and Byron work very bad for me without a doubt" (July 13). In this series of essays, written at irregular intervals, Ruskin had two main subjects, and he takes up the one or the other as the spirit moves him. One of the subjects is that indicated in the title given to the papers. What is fiction? he asks (though not till the last paper). He answers in a passage in which a Greek vase is happily taken as a type of a fair fictile thing. His attack is upon the morbid taint in modern fiction, which he traces in several pages of acute analysis to the unhealthy conditions of modern town-life. The study of Gotthelf<sup>1</sup> may be taken as a corrective which he desired to supply, though he was conscious enough that the novelist of agricultural Switzerland had *longueurs* and dulness which readers of the highly-spiced fiction of the day might find intolerable. But in the present papers Sir Walter is the model which Ruskin holds up in contrast, and a considerable part of the essays is taken up with various studies in Scott's novels. He defines and classifies the novels in order of merit; explains and defends Scott's use of dialect; draws out points of character from Sir Walter's Sunday diversions; classifies his types, and so forth. The second main subject of the essays is a critical

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 519.

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comparison between Wordsworth and Byron, and this occupies the third and fourth chapters, where also is contained an interesting disquisition on the characteristics of good style in literature. Ruskin is not blind to the defects of Byron; but, writing in a generation when depreciation of Byron had been the critical fashion, he laid stress on the native force, the strain of noble feeling, the heroic themes, and the sense for the great style which are to be counted among the poet's virtues. Tempted by the then recently published essays in which Matthew Arnold had extolled Wordsworth, to the depreciation of Byron, Ruskin, in *Fiction, Fair and Foul*, goes to the other extreme and depreciates Wordsworth, to the aggrandisement of Byron. The passages in which he executes this manœuvre are admirable examples of the resources of his literary art—sometimes highly charged with allusive ornament (as in the comparison between the Little Duddon and the rivers of stormier history to whose music Byron sang); sometimes barbed with gentle irony (as in the reference to Fox How and Rydal Mount). Ruskin's "bucolic friends" protested, it seems, against his present disparagement of Wordsworth; but his appreciation of Wordsworth remains where it will not soon be forgotten—on every title-page of *Modern Painters*. These later essays unsay nothing of what Ruskin had said before in praise of his master; but there is no poet more unequal than Wordsworth, and Ruskin was moved by injustice done, as he considered, to Byron, to deal out severe justice to Wordsworth's occasional narrowness of view and fatal facility in dropping into bathos.

## V

Ruskin was at this time a candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University. He had been put forward by the Conservative Club in opposition to John Bright. He had warned his young friends at the outset that though he was "the staunchest Conservative in the British Islands," he yet held opinions concerning lands and rents which no Conservative Club would sanction. As the



contest proceeded, he was asked to declare himself more definitely. His response was as follows:—

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“What in the devil’s name have *you* to do with either Mr. D’Israeli or Mr. Gladstone? You are students at the University, and have no more business with politics than you have with rat-catching. Had you ever read ten words of mine with understanding you would have known that I care no more either for Mr. D’Israeli or Mr. Gladstone than for two old bagpipes with the drones going by steam, but that I hate all Liberalism as I do Beelzebub, and that, with Carlyle, I stand, we two alone now in England, for God and the Queen.”

Ruskin was badly beaten in the election. What else was likely to befall a candidate who so signally failed to play the party game, and told the eager young politicians whose votes he was soliciting that they had much better stick to their desks? The letter found its way into the press and caused a prodigious hubbub. Probably it amused Mr. Gladstone, but it pained his daughter. It was not merely that Ruskin had called *him* an old bagpipe, but that he had presumed to place him no higher than Lord Beaconsfield. Ruskin had to employ his best diplomatic art to get himself out of the scrape. The boys had asked him a question they had no business with, and “they got their answer written between two coats of colour which I was laying on an oak leaf and about which I was that morning exceedingly solicitous.” Still the answer was deliberate, and though not written for publication, yet he had known that it might be published. He would never write privately of any man—far less of one whom he honoured and loved—words which he would not let him hear and see. He did not “for an instant mean any comparison between Disraeli and your Father”; they both had to be named, because both had been questioned of, and the point was that the students should not trouble their young heads about either. He had, he admitted, some lurking tenderness about Disraeli, because his own father had a liking for him, but he knew nothing about him. On the other hand, “I love and honour your Father; just as I have



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always told him and you that I did—as a perfectly right-minded private English gentleman, as a man of purest religious temper, as one tenderly compassionate, and as one earnestly (desiring to be) just.” But he had never concealed that he did not like Mr. Gladstone’s politics; and his daughter was to “remember that if your Father said publicly of me that he cared no more for *me* (meaning Political and Economical me) than for a broken bottle stuck on the top of a wall, I should say only—‘Well, I knew that before, but the rest of me he loves, for all that.’” The explanation was accepted. “It is unspeakably sweet of your Father and you,” Ruskin wrote (Oct. 28, 1880), “to forgive me so soon, and I’m inclined to believe anything you’ll tell me of him, after that.” Ruskin’s attitude to Mr. Gladstone was that which had come to be Tennyson’s—“I love the man, but hate his politics”; and in each case friendly relations were maintained on these terms. At a later date, when Mr. Gladstone was considering the question of the Laureateship, “his thoughts strayed to Ruskin, and Acland was applied to by him as to whether Ruskin’s health would permit of the offer being made, but Acland could give him no encouragement and the project fell still-born.”<sup>1</sup>

The Glasgow letter was included in the collection called *Arrows of the Chace*, which has already been described (Chap. XXII.). The book, published in December 1880, attracted much attention, and encouraged all sorts of people and newspapers to apply to Ruskin for his views on every conceivable subject. A further collection of “Arrows,” sped at intervals between 1880 and 1888, has been made in the Library Edition of his Works. Partly in good nature, partly in self-confidence, he was easily “drawn,” and allowed himself, as he says in one of the letters, to be “plagued about things in general.” That he still wrote “with fully provoked zeal”<sup>2</sup> need not be doubted; but in these latter years the stimulus often came from without, not from within. In such cases he would speed his arrow, sometimes in hasty scorn, sometimes to tease or startle. There was a

<sup>1</sup> This was in 1892. *Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, p. 487.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 384.

great hubbub in the critical press when, in amending Lord Avebury's list of the "Best Hundred Books," Ruskin "put his pen blottesquely" through the name of Gibbon. Solemn critics informed Ruskin that "to omit Gibbon is to leave a gap in your knowledge of the history of the world which nothing else can fill." As if Ruskin were not aware of that fact! He knew his Gibbon well, and had annotated it page by page. He quarried from the marvellous mine freely; but he was not going to abstain from his fling at Gibbon's epithets, nor was he persuaded that every book indispensable to a scholar is necessarily to be included among the selection for a general reader. Here, as elsewhere, Ruskin's explosions of opinion are personal, sincere, and therefore interesting to any student of his life and work. They are, also, seldom expressed except with characteristic vigour or felicity. The later letters are often more hasty, and less rich in metaphor than the earlier. But his art of expression is still there. How happy, for instance, is his rule for critics—to "praise the living and be just to the dead"; or his satire, in connexion with new railways to "open up" beautiful scenery, upon those who "think to refresh themselves from the foundry by picnic in a lime-kiln." His description of the Derbyshire glens is as vivid as anything he ever wrote. His excursions into politics were random; but he put very happily some facts about Ireland which professional politicians do not always remember. Such explosions were, however, dangerous to his health, and destructive of his rest. It is to this period also (1879, 1880) that the foundation of "Ruskin Societies" and "Ruskin Reading Guilds" in Manchester, Glasgow, London, and many other places belongs. They had a considerable effect in spreading Ruskin's influence and increasing the circulation of his books, which, it should be remembered, had for many years been neither advertised nor noticed in the newspapers. Owing to the fact that Ruskin did not now send free copies of his books for review, the professedly literary journals made no reference whatever to anything that was written by one of the foremost literary men of the time. The "Ruskin Societies" and "Ruskin Reading Guilds" came in this matter to the rescue; but the

CHAP. necessary penalty of increasing vogue was a great addition  
XXV. to the burden of Ruskin's correspondence. He might wish, in times of illness, to shut himself off from the world, but the world declined to be a party to the arrangement.

It had been well, I wrote above, if Ruskin could have found peace in untroubled skies; but this also the fates forbade. No man, as I have already noted, was ever more sensitive than he to physical impressions from external nature;<sup>1</sup> for indeed physical and spiritual light were to him the same, and never was there a man who lived more largely in the contemplation of sky and cloud, of lake and flowers and hills. The physical corruption of the heavens by "The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century"—a very real phenomenon, as we shall see—was to Ruskin as the darkening of a spiritual light. There were, of course, as he records in his lectures, days of serene weather and of wholesome storm, and at such times his mental moods responded to the genial touch. These were times when he was able, as he says in the diary (February 26, 1880), to gain "so much of life out of the night." But records of the "plague-wind" became ominously persistent. Some of these records are printed in his lectures; one or others may here be added:—

"(*January 5, 1880.*)—Came down at a quarter to nine into the dark room, with a drenching fog over all heaven and earth."

"(*January 8.*)—Deadly fog—rain these three days, without a gleam; to-day, Manchester smoke, with the usual devilry of cloud moving fast in rags, with no wind."

Such entries are ominous of impending storm.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 323.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE BIBLE OF AMIENS—FURTHER ILLNESSES

(1880—1882)

“If, preparing yourselves to lie down beneath the grass in silence and loneliness, seeing no more beauty, and feeling no more gladness—you would care for the promise to you of a time when you should see God’s light again, and know the things you have longed to know, and walk in the peace of everlasting Love—*then*, the Hope of these things to you is religion, the Substance of them in your life is Faith.”—*Bible of Amiens*.

#### I

THE depression and irritability which were gathering upon Ruskin, after his return to the fray, seemed to be relieved by travels in Northern France. In August 1880 he set forth to revisit some of the cathedrals, in view of a series of Sketches of Christian History and Architecture which he had now projected. He desired in particular to revisit Amiens, as he had promised to give a lecture on the cathedral to the Eton boys. The tour was in two parts. He went first for six weeks with Laurence Hilliard and one of his sisters; then crossed to Dover and stayed for some days with his friends, Miss Gale and her sister, at Canterbury; and next returned to France, being accompanied by Mr. Arthur Severn and Mr. Brabazon. Those who saw the Ruskin exhibition in London in 1907 will remember many drawings made on this tour, and among them one, inscribed as sketched in company with Mr. Brabazon, which shows an impressionist “breadth” not always characteristic of Ruskin’s work. Mr. Severn recalls an incident at Amiens which greatly amused Ruskin. “Our Amiens landlady had introduced us to a very nice old Frenchman, asking us all into her private sitting-room to hear him play the piano. But instead of his



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playing a solo, he and Brabazon played a four-hand piece, Brabazon with such vigour, and gradually quickening the time, that at last the Frenchman could stand it no longer, and pushing himself away from the piano, said, 'But, sir, you are a master! I am only a coal merchant. Bless me, how I sweat!' With that he mopped his bald head, and after a few minutes' rest they went at it again. But we all felt that Brabazon had played him out." A little later, when Ruskin was wrestling with modern German music, he wrote to Mr. Severn, sending his "love to Brabazon" and saying "what larks" it would be if he would only "smash a German man as he did the Amiens one."

French scenery exercised its old spell over Ruskin, and he was happy to find some of his favourite spots unspoilt. "The villages along the coteau, from Abbeville here," he wrote at Amiens (Aug. 29), "though all with north exposure, were entirely divine with their orchards and harvests, and hills of sweet pastoral swelling above." At Beauvais he found "more left in the town than ever he hoped to see again in France," and even the new railway-line thither from Amiens pleased him with "every instant a newly divine landscape of wood, harvest-field, and coteau" (Aug. 31). At Chartres he was equally happy. "Up, *D.G.*, in perfectly good health and lovely sunshine, and one thing lovelier than another, in the inexhaustible old town" (Sept. 10). But it was at Amiens that on this tour his chief work lay. He began to write *The Bible of Amiens* on October 17, and the writing was combined with sketching many of the pieces of sculpture which he was to catalogue and describe. To attune his thoughts to the system of theology which he found upon the stones of Amiens, Ruskin at this time made a daily study of the Kalendars of saints in some of his illuminated manuscripts, and copied out in his diary verses of mediæval hymns or litanies. The lecture was given at Eton, on November 6, shortly after his return.

*The Bible of Amiens*, issued in separate Parts at various dates between 1880 and 1885, is one of the most popular of Ruskin's later writings. It owes some of its circulation to use as a guide-book; the visitor to Amiens will readily find

other books, both large and small, which cover the descriptive and explanatory ground more fully, but none which will take him more faithfully to the heart of the matter. Ruskin's title is, as usual, a clue to his purpose. *The Bible of Amiens*, it should be noted, was a sub-title, the principal one being *Our Fathers have Told Us*, which again was explained as indicating "Sketches of the History of Christendom for boys and girls who have been held at its founts." As in *St. Mark's Rest* the object was to tell some chapters of "the History of Venice for the help of the few travellers who still care for her monuments"—the monuments described in the *Stones of Venice*—so was *The Bible of Amiens* to tell some passages of early Christian history, in order to illustrate the spirit which lit the Lamps of Christian Architecture. We start at Amiens itself; but before we find ourselves in front of the cathedral again, we have been taken upon journeys "Under the Drachenfels" and over a considerable portion of northern Europe as well, not without some excursion to southern lands, and have made acquaintance with "The Lion Tamer," St. Jerome. There is a sentence in the final chapter of the book which gives the meaning of these excursions into seemingly foreign fields. "Who built it?" asks Ruskin, as he bids us look up to "the Parthenon of Gothic Architecture." "God, and Man," he tells us, "is the first and most true answer. The stars in their courses built it, and the Nations. Greek Athena labours here—and Roman Father Jove, and Guardian Mars. The Gaul labours here, and the Frank: knightly Norman,—mighty Ostrogoth,—and wasted anchorite of Idumea,"—through whom "the Bible became the library of Europe"—the library of Europe, presented everywhere to the Church as of common authority, and everywhere inscribed on the stones of its buildings. "The Life, and Gospel, and Power of it, are all written in the mighty works of its true believers: in Normandy and Sicily, on river islets of France and in the river glens of England, on the rocks of Orvieto, and by the sands of Arno. But of all, the simplest, completest, and most authoritative in its lessons to the active mind of North Europe, is this on the foundation stones of Amiens." Ruskin's description of the cathedral is not complete. He

CHAP. does, indeed, glance at many of its features, and always in a  
XXVI. suggestive way. His insistence upon the purity of its Gothic served as the starting-point for Mr. Pater's essay on the cathedral.<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's remarks upon the economy of means by which the effect of size was attained by the builders is a happy illustration of a passage in the *Seven Lamps*. Let your building, he there says, "be well gathered together"; for "those buildings seem on the whole the vastest which have been gathered up into a mighty square, and which look as if they had been measured by the angel's rod: 'the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal.'" The words must have occurred to many a traveller as on leaving Amiens he has seen the cathedral gather itself into an increasing mass as it recedes from view. Ruskin's description, again, of the wood-carvings of the choir catches in a few lines the very spirit of the wonderful work. To the choir-screen, partly described in Chapter i., he did not revert; a modern writer, it will be remembered, has made it the subject of an interesting chapter.<sup>2</sup> Upon one part of the cathedral, the south door, Ruskin did not here enter, because he had described it already in an earlier book;<sup>3</sup> others he left alone, perhaps because their destruction by restoration was too painful a subject. But his reason for concentrating attention on the quatrefoils of the western façade was that in them is "the series of sculpture in illustration of Apostolic and Prophetic teaching which constitutes what I mean by the 'Bible' of Amiens." It is to them, therefore, that his chapter of "Interpretations" is mainly devoted.

Of Ruskin's many unwritten Books in the Brain,<sup>4</sup> the series, of which *The Bible of Amiens* was to have been only the first Part, is the most to be regretted. In successive volumes he intended to deal with (2) Verona, (3) Rome, (4) Pisa, (5) Florence, (6) the Monastic Architecture of England and Wales, (7) Chartres, (8) Rouen, (9) Lucerne, and (10) Geneva. The titles selected for the volumes give tantalising foretaste

<sup>1</sup> See his *Miscellaneous Studies*, p. 105: "The greatest and purest of Gothic churches, Notre-Dame d'Amiens," etc.

<sup>2</sup> *La Cathédrale*, by M. Huysmans, ch. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> *The Two Paths*, §§ 112-114.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 400.



of the glamour of historical and poetical association which Ruskin threw over his subjects—the “Ponte della Pietra,” for Verona, the bridge which had carried the march alike of Roman armies and of Theodoric the Goth; “Ara Cœli,” for Rome, a church with old associations in Ruskin’s mind;<sup>1</sup> “Ponte-a-Mare,” for Pisa, the bridge built in the fourteenth century, “never more to be seen by living eyes”;<sup>2</sup> the “Ponte Vecchio,” for Florence; “Valle Crucis,” for the monasteries of England and Wales; “the Springs of Eure,” for Chartres and its cathedral—the church which he most admired; for Rouen, “Domrémy,” in whose forests the Maid of Orleans learnt her woodnotes wild; for the pastoral forms of Catholicism, “The Bay of Uri,” so beautiful in Turner’s drawings and Ruskin’s description;<sup>3</sup> and for the pastoral Protestantism of Savoy, “The Bells of Cluse”—the bells from the towers of Magland, whose harmonious chime once “filled the whole valley with sweet sound”<sup>4</sup>—“the sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of mediæval age, which falls upon the ear like the echo of a vanished world.”<sup>5</sup> One or two chapters he wrote, and notes for others were found among his papers; but these plans, of which the realisation might have occupied many years of his fullest working life, were destined, in the actual circumstances of his broken health and scattered energies, to remain only a beautiful dream.

## II

In *The Bible of Amiens* we may find, I think, the final phase, the central position, of Ruskin’s religious views. The evangelical phase was long passed; more and more he had come to revolt against any narrowness or self-sufficiency in creed. But he had now passed the phase of rationalism and doubt. For some years he had asked his readers to note a more distinctively Christian tone in his teaching. It was, in

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Val d’Arno*, § 282.

<sup>3</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. v.

<sup>4</sup> *Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. v. (“The Valley of Cluse”).

<sup>5</sup> Froude’s *History of England*, ch. i.



CHAP. one sense, a more "Catholic tone." In his *Letters to the*  
 XXVI. *Clergy* (1879) he had deplored the changes of the liturgy in the English Book of Common Prayer; he paid more and more attention to the saints and martyrs of mediæval Christendom; and from time to time there were reports in the press, and gossip in the mouths of men, of Ruskin as of so many other famous men, that he was about to join, or had secretly joined, the Roman Communion. They were untrue. That he remained unconverted was not due, however, to lack of persuasion on the part of Roman Catholic friends. A letter has been published from Mr. Aubrey de Vere in which he suggested to Patmore that, considering how much influence he had with Ruskin, he should write seriously to their common friend "respecting the claims of the Church on men who see as much as he does, when not in perverse moods, of its character and its *work*."<sup>1</sup> Ruskin had also for many years been a friend of Cardinal Manning. He sent Catholic books, such as the *Fioretti* of St. Francis, to Ruskin; he applauded any lectures or essays which showed sympathy with "the Church," and Ruskin was often a visitor at Archbishop's House. He enjoyed Manning's society greatly, as may be seen from a letter written during the tour in France:—

(To MISS BEEVER.) "BEAUVAIS, Sept. 1880.—Now you're just wrong about my darling Cardinal. See what it is to be jealous! He gave me lovely soup, roast beef, hare and currant jelly, puff pastry like Papal pretensions—you had but to breathe on it and it was nowhere—raisins and almonds, and those lovely preserved cherries like kisses kept in amber. And told me delicious stories all through lunch. *There!*"

Among Ruskin's papers is a copy of a letter addressed to Manning himself:—

"BRANTWOOD, Jan. 25, 1878.—MY DEAR LORD CARDINAL,—It was a great joy to me to receive your letter, in all but that it told me you had been ill. There are few people now left for me in the world whose illness troubles me;—yours does, both for my own heart's sake, and in its anxiety for the good of the Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, vol. ii. p. 342.

Church (when does one get over that wicked foolishness of anxiety ?) —which can ill spare you, it seems to me. CHAP. XXVI.

“ Yes, that Oxford Lecture,<sup>1</sup> in common with all I have written since 1875, means what you desire it should ; and that in the ultimate degree implied in what I am well assured you remember me once saying to you, that ‘ no educated man could be a Christian, without also being a Catholic ’—and yet, your Eminence’s interpretation of that last word would be—is—so much other (and so much narrower !) than mine, that I fear you are a long way yet from being able to rejoice over your ‘ picce which was lost.’ ”

And so also to Coventry Patmore, Ruskin had written (Feb. 1876) of his “ Catholic Faith wider than yours.” This was Ruskin’s position to the end. In 1887 he had given a stained-glass window to the Roman Catholic chapel at Coniston, and this piece of neighbourly sympathy had set tongues wagging :—

(*To a Correspondent.*) “ BRANTWOOD, April 1, ’87.—I shall be entirely grateful to you if you will take the trouble to contradict any news gossip of this kind which may be disturbing the minds of any of my Scottish friends. I was, am, and can be, only a Christian Catholic in the wide and eternal sense. I have been that these five-and-twenty years at least. Heaven keep me from being less as I grow older ! but I am no more likely to become a Roman Catholic than a Quaker, Evangelical, or Turk.”

In another letter of about the same date,<sup>2</sup> Ruskin explained “ the breadth of his own creed or communion.” “ I gladly take,” he wrote, “ the bread, water, wine, or meat of the Lord’s Supper with members of my own family or nation who obey Him, and should be equally sure it was His giving, if I were myself worthy to receive it, whether the intermediate mortal hand were the Pope’s, the Queen’s, or a hedge-side gipsy’s.” The words throw light on what he says in *The Bible of Amiens* :<sup>3</sup> “ All differences of Church put aside, the words ‘ except ye eat the flesh of the Son of

<sup>1</sup> In the *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1878 ; the lecture which had interested Gladstone also, see above, p. 401.

<sup>2</sup> The letter was printed, without date, in the *Standard*, May 28 1889.

<sup>3</sup> See also above, p. 292.

CHAP. Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you ' remain in  
XXVI. their mystery, to be understood only by those who have learned the sacredness of food, in all times and places, and the laws of life and spirit, dependent on its acceptance, refusal, and distribution." On its acceptance, in the spirit of Longfellow's lines:—

" A holy family, that makes  
Each meal a Supper of the Lord ; "

on its refusal, in a double sense—Ruskin's meaning being, on the one side, that he who refuses "the good gifts of God" shuts himself off from an intended use, and, on the other side, that all immoderate indulgence must be refused both as harmful to the individual and as wrongful to others; and thus, lastly, on its distribution, in the spirit of Lowell's lines:—

" The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In whatso we share with another's need."

Here are two aspects of Ruskin's religion, and their point of contact with his social and economic teaching. "All true Christianity," he says in his ninth Letter on the Lord's Prayer, "is known, as its Master was, in breaking of bread, and all false Christianity in stealing it. Let the clergyman only apply—with impartial and level sweep—to his congregation the great pastoral order: 'The man that will not work neither should he eat': and be resolute in requiring each member of his flock to tell him *what*—day by day—they do to earn their dinners;—and he will find an entirely new view of life and its sacraments open upon him and them." He believed intensely that "every good and perfect gift is from above," and he had little sympathy with the ascetic ideal, which would renounce them. But he believed no less intensely, with Lowell, that faith without works was dead. If his communion was thus broad, so also was his creed. He believed in the universality of inspiration; he attributed it to "the whole body of believers, in so far as they are partakers of the Grace of Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost." He believed also in what theologians call, I think, "continuous" or

“developing” inspiration; his desire was that his writings should “be found by an attentive reader to bind themselves together into a general system of interpretation of sacred literature,—both classic and Christian, which will enable him without injustice to sympathise in the faiths of candid and generous souls, of every age and every clime.” He abhorred the doctrine that morality was dependent only on religion. He states no precise dogmas, but in the concluding passage of *The Bible of Amiens*, from which I have quoted at the head of this chapter, he defines what was to him the substance of religion; and throughout its pages, and those of his other later works, he insists on the revelation of the Divine Spirit as the fact which gives the clue to history, meaning to life, and hope for the future.

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### III

After revising the proofs for the first Part of *The Bible of Amiens* and spending some days in the National Gallery upon a new Catalogue of the Turner Drawings and Sketches,<sup>1</sup> Ruskin returned to Brantwood. He had been over-taxing his strength, and soon found himself “much beaten and tired, and must positively take to the rocks and grass again for a while” (Dec. 26). The depression gathered once more, and was deepened by sleepless nights and dreams—“grotesque, terrific, inevitable,” he calls them (Jan. 9, 1881). And, presently, the troubled night of dreams passed into his days.

On February 4, 1881, Carlyle died; and two or three weeks later Ruskin was for the second time laid prostrate by what he afterwards described as “terrific delirium.” The fever lasted for a month, but his recovery seemed to be speedy. “On the 22nd March,” he notes, “I was down in my study writing business letters, and yesterday, the 7th April—the third anniversary of my coming down to study after my first illness—I was walking in the wood for good three hours with as good strength as I’ve ever felt.”

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 124.



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"I've just read your dear letter to me on my birthday," he wrote to Professor Norton (March 24), "after having another bite or two of Nebuchadnezzar's bitter grass. I went wild again for three weeks or so, and have only just come to myself—if this be myself, and not the one that lives in dreams."

"Both these illnesses," he wrote to Dr. John Brown (March 29), "have been part of one and the same constant thought, far out of sight to the people about me, and, of course, getting more and more separated from me as *they* go on in the ways of the modern world, and *I* go *back* to live with my Father and my Mother and my Nurse, and one more,—all waiting for me in the Land of the Leal." A month later he reported himself to Norton as "quite afloat again and on his usual stream." And similarly to George Richmond (May 20):—

"Oh me! do you recollect when you first made me read *Past and Present*? It was the only book I could get help from during my illness, which was partly brought on by the sense of loneliness—and greater responsibility brought upon me by Carlyle's death. That and a course of saintly studies for *Amiens*, which I fancy the Devil objected to;—but I'm getting quietly into work again, for all that, and hope he'll get the worst of it, at last—nor even now has he done me much harm, in teaching me what kind of temper Blake worked in—and one or two more in old days."

But the recovery was, in fact, by no means complete. The patient gave himself little chance. He plunged at once into work. Yet he was restless and irritable, and could do nothing long. Change to sea-air at Seascale did not greatly relieve him. "He is almost as active as ever," wrote his secretary, Laurence Hilliard, "but he seems more and more to find a difficulty in keeping to any one settled train of thought or work. We try to help him, but the influence of any one of those around him is now very small, and has been so ever since the last illness."<sup>1</sup> The diary shows that this was a time of great mental excitement, bordering sometimes upon collapse. Yet from time to time he was able to make progress with his

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*, vol. ii. pp. 171–172.

many books. "I begin the last twelfth of year," he writes in the diary (December 1), "in which I proceed, *D.V.*, to finish *Amiens* ii. and *Proserpina* vii.; and in the year I shall have done, in spite of illness, three *Amiens*, one *Proserpina*, and the Scott paper for *Nineteenth*, besides a good deal of trouble with last edition of *Stones of Venice*; but, alas, what a wretched year's work it is! and even that not finished yet! But then there was some good drawing in spring." The second part of *The Bible of Amiens* was finished, and the third begun, a few days later. His mind was busy, too, with the general plan of *Our Fathers*, but he found concentration difficult. "I must do it," he notes, "a stitch here and a patch there" (Dec. 18). He was, however, listless and depressed. The diary records many a day of "hesitations, shifts, and despairings," and the dread of what had been and might be once more stood not far behind. "Terribly languid," he wrote on January 15, "but better so than in that dangerous excitement which came on me in October, I hope, for the last time, since I shall never encourage it again." But it was not so to be.

Early in 1882 he went up to London, and in the excitement of change of scene and occupation believed himself to have conquered the danger. He sketched at the National Gallery; went to plays and pantomimes; listened to music from Miss Mary Gladstone. On Feb. 13 he took the chair at a lecture given by his friend Frederick Gale, the "Old Buffer" of many sporting books and papers, on Modern English Sports. On this occasion Ruskin threw out suggestions for a revival of pageantry in modern life. His remarks were scoffed at in the press as showing "a characteristic lack of the sense of the ridiculous";<sup>1</sup> but the revival has come. Later in the month he wrote a *General Statement* explaining the *Nature and Purposes of St. George's Guild*—a perfectly lucid document. He ended it with an urgent appeal for public subscriptions to secure for the nation some of the more precious of the Hamilton Manuscripts, which were then about to come into the market. He received not one penny in response; but before he knew the full measure

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 16, 1882.

CHAP. of this disappointment, he was yet for a third time con-  
XXVI. demned to "Nebuchadnezzar's grass." The attack of brain-fever with which he was smitten in March was very severe. He was attended by Sir William Gull, who paid him the compliment, in acknowledging the patient's fee, of "preferring to keep the cheque as an autograph."

## IV

Ruskin recovered quickly, and by April he was able to write:—

(To MISS BEEVER.) "*Easter Day*, 1882.—I have had a happy Easter morning, entirely bright in its sun and clear in sky; and with renewed strength enough to begin again the piece of St. Benedict's life where I broke off,<sup>1</sup> to lose these four weeks in London, —weeks not wholly lost neither, for I have learned more and more of what I should have known without lessoning; but I *have* learnt it, from these repeated dreams and fantasies, that we walk in a vain shadow and disquiet ourselves in vain. So I am for the present, everybody says, quite good, and give as little trouble as possible; but people *will* take it, you know, sometimes, even when I don't give it, and there's a great fuss about me yet. But *you* must not be anxious any more, Susie, for really there is no more occasion at one time than another. All the doctors say I needn't be ill unless I like, and I don't mean to like any more."

He enjoyed his convalescence greatly. He had his May Queens from Whitelands College to see him. He went to the picture exhibitions, and admired immensely Millais's *Caller Herrin*'—"the most pathetic single figure I ever saw in my life, and such painting as there has not been since Tintoret."<sup>2</sup> He went to a dinner given by Mr. Quaritch in honour of Sir Richard Burton, enjoyed himself, made a speech, and "fraternised with the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*":—

(To BERNARD QUARITCH.) "*HERNE HILL*, 15th June.—It is very pretty and kind of you to write. I was very happy and very

<sup>1</sup> Ultimately used in the lecture called *Mending the Sieve*: see below, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Mrs. Severn, June 2.

proud, and had ever so much nice talk with Mr. Edwin Arnold, who is a friend of 30 years, and with the Cornwall Member [W. C. Borlase], whom I'll try to make one of as many years as I may. I never was at a dinner, or in a company, where every one was so simply and sincerely desirous to make the others happy. I was nearly crushed by the great linguist's compliment, but am immensely set up by it now; it was said so sincerely and kindly. Your own addresses were, as I think more and more all that you do, very wonderful in their full grasp and appositeness, and variously unexpected knowledge. I got home quite well—and slept well—and am very grateful to you and all your friends. What a *dear* that Captain Cameron is!"

He spent happy days with Mr. Fletcher at the Natural History Museum arranging silicas; he went to concerts and operas; he visited his friends:—

(To MRS. BURNE-JONES.) "30th June. . . . Of all the *bête*, clumsy, blundering, boggling, baboon-blooded stuff I ever saw on a human stage, that thing last night [*The Meistersinger*] beat—as far as the story and acting went; and of all the affected, sapless, soulless, beginningless, endless, topless, bottomless, topsiturvist, tuneless, scrannelpipiest, tongs and boniest doggrel of sounds I ever endured the deadliness of, that eternity of nothing was the deadliest, as far as the sound went. I never was so relieved, so far as I can remember, in my life, by the stopping of any sound—not excepting railway whistles—as I was by the cessation of the cobbler's bellowing; even the serenader's caricatured twangle was a rest after it. As for the great 'Lied,' I never made out where it began, or where it ended,—except by the fellow's coming off the horse block."

(To MRS. SEVERN.) "July 2.—We had the most delicious performance of *Don Giovanni* I ever was at. Not because of Patti, but because *the whole* cast was good, and the great choruses studied and perfect—as I've never heard them yet. It was one feast of glorious sound for three hours—lasting till nearly a quarter to 12, with very short intervals. Patti spoiled the *La ci darem* by too fast time, but sang all the rest of her songs clearly and carefully, and the men singers were superb. Then we had a lovely



CHAP. moonlight drive to the Grange, and Ned gave me his own room to  
XXVI. sleep in, full of no end of sketch-books. At breakfast, Morris, whom I was most happy to see."

(*To the same.*) "Tuesday 4th [? July, '82, HERNE HILL]. . . . I took my Christie cheque<sup>1</sup> to Walbrook myself yesterday, and found both the partners in—old Mr. Tarrant just beginning his lunch. I insisted on his going on. He said Grace before meat in the form of a loud 'Hallelujah!' when he heard I was coming to *buy* stock instead of *sell*!"

(*To the same.*) "Saturday. . . . I had an entirely happy afternoon with Holman Hunt—entirely happy because, first, at his studio I had seen, approaching completion, out and out the grandest picture he has ever done, which will restore him at once, when it is seen, to his former sacred throne. It is a 'Flight into Egypt,' but treated with an originality, power, and artistic quality of design, hitherto unapproached by him. Of course my feeling this made *him* very happy, and as Millais says the same, we're pretty sure, the two of us, to be right! Then we drove out to his house at Fulham. Such Eastern carpets—such metal work! such sixteenth-century caskets and chests—such sweet order in putting together—for comfort and use—and *three* Luca della Robbias on the walls!—with lovely green garden outside, and a small cherry tree in it before the window, looking like twenty coral necklaces with their strings broken, falling into a shower."

He was enjoying himself greatly, and was minded to stay on in London indefinitely or to return to work at Brantwood. But his physician had been imperative on the necessity of change of air and foreign travel, and in August he started on a tour which was to give him a new lease of happy, because busy, life.

<sup>1</sup> No doubt for Meissonier's for 5900 guineas. He had paid "1814," which he sold in this year £1000 for it.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### SECOND PROFESSORSHIP AT OXFORD

(1882-1885)

"Things not, in the nature of them, it seems to me, beyond what yet remains of an old man's energy."—*The Art of England* (1883).

#### I

IN August 1882 Ruskin set out with Mr. Collingwood upon a holiday-journey of the kind that the judiciously experienced traveller accounts the best: it included familiar scenes, yet broke also some new ground. Ruskin's travelling companion has written an account of their journey in a chapter which he calls "Ruskin's Old Road."<sup>1</sup> The title is happy, for Ruskin, it seems, had already *Præterita* in contemplation, and it was one object of his tour to revisit the scenes and revive the memories of old days. He drove once more, as in the old posting-days, through the Jura to Geneva—stopping at Champagnole. "I never thought to date from this dear place more," he says in his diary (Sept. 3), "and I am here in, for my age, very perfect health so far as I feel or know, and was very thankful on my mother's birthday to kneel down once more on the rocks of Jura." At Sallenches it was one of the pleasures of the tour to take his friend to favourite sights and scenes. He thus showed "Norton's glen," so called in memory of happy walks in former years. The friend gave as much pleasure as he received. It was on this tour that Mr. Collingwood made the geological observations recorded in his *Limestone Alps of Savoy*, and

<sup>1</sup> And in two following chapters, chapters occupy pp. 47-104 of entitled "Ruskin's 'Cashbook'" *Ruskin Relics*, 1903.  
and "Ruskin's Ilaria." The three

CHAP. that Ruskin found, as he says in his Introduction to that  
XXVII. book, that his friend's "instinct for the lines expressive of the action of the beds was far more detective than my own." Ruskin's pleasure at Mornex in finding himself remembered and in meeting old friends has been told already, in connexion with his long sojourn there twenty years before.<sup>1</sup> The Hôtel du Mont Blanc at St. Martin, where he had stayed so often in earlier years, was now deserted and for sale, and he had some idea of buying it. Later in the tour, in Italy, Ruskin revisited another of the places which had greatly influenced him. "Here once more," he wrote at Pisa (Sept. 26), "where I began all my true work in 1845. Thirty-seven full years of it—how much in vain! How much strength left I know not—but yet trust the end may be better than the beginning." His zest, his industry, his many-sided curiosity, were as keen as ever. He had a second object in these travels besides the renewal of old impressions. He was at the time devoting much thought to his museum. He had been at Sheffield in July, and the prospect of a new building seemed favourable. He had artists working for him in France and Italy; Mr. Collingwood, his companion and private secretary, was also one of his helpers in this respect; he desired to select subjects for them to record and to take the opportunity of meeting some of them on the spot. He took his literary work with him. The preface to a new edition of *Sesame* is dated at Avallon (Aug. 24), and a chapter (iii.) of *The Bible of Amiens* was finished at the same place. Notes to revised editions of *Mornings in Florence*, and of the second volume of *Modern Painters*, were written in Florence, Lucca, and Pisa. All his varied interests in architecture, painting, botany, geology and mineralogy are reflected in his diary and letters:—

LAON, Aug. 12 (diary).—"All beautiful round me—and I feeling as able for my work as ever."

(To L. FLETCHER, F.R.S.) "LAON, Aug. 14.—This place is so full of interest that I could not get to work on the chalcedonies till to-day; but I have nearly got the whole now into order, for

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 49.

an illustrated series of 100 specimens. . . . This place is very odd in its geology—hard limestone on the top of sands—an outlier—and with lovely springs at the top of it! The surface is not more than three square miles at most, so the springs can't be supplied by any superficial rain. It's the oddest thing to me that ever was, and I'm going to look for some Laonnois Moses in the Cathedral legends. . . ."

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SENS, *Aug. 19* (diary).—"The Seine divinely beautiful here. I have never enough thought out that Turner's work was the 'Rivers' of France, not the 'towns' of it—how he was the first painting living creature who saw the beauty of a 'coteau'! The glorious lines of the ascending vineyards to be sketched this morning if possible, and the statues of porch deciphered. They are the finest I hitherto know, north of the Alps."

AVALLON (diary).—"The lovely little snapdragon I found at Sens, here (Avallon) luxuriant, straggling two feet high with dozens of blossoms among slender strips of leaves. Blossom with upper two petals thrown up like the sharpest little fox's ears, and more like some bat's—veined purple on white, the swollen lip below pure white touched with yellow in the throat."

Avallon was new to Ruskin, and there he stayed for a fortnight. The place delighted him, and there was much which Mr. Randal (as at a later date, Mr. Rooke) was commissioned to draw. He went over to Vezelay, but the heaviness of that church—its *inertia*, as Mr. Pater calls it,<sup>1</sup>—did not please him. Another expedition from Avallon was to Montréal, where the grotesque carvings set another task to Mr. Randal.

Ruskin was planning at the time *Parts in Our Fathers have Told Us*, and among others one entitled *Valle Crucis*, which was to deal with the history and architecture of monasticism. It was in connexion with this that he went from Dijon to Cîteaux, the home of the Cistercians, and to St. Bernard's birthplace at La Fontaine. "I recall," says Mr. Collingwood, "the surprise of a bystander not wholly unsympathetic, when Ruskin knelt down on the spot of the great saint's nativity, and stayed long in prayer."

<sup>1</sup> In his essay on "Vezelay" included in *Miscellaneous Studies*, 1895.



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From Dijon the travellers went by the old road, partly walking, partly driving, through Champagnole and St. Cergues to Geneva. There he sketched, and, as his diary notes, "studied the Rhone"—with results afterwards to be embodied in *Præterita*.<sup>1</sup> He went up the valley of the Arve to Sallenches:—

"(Sept. 11.)—Opened (meaning to take up *Deucalion* but took up Bible instead) at Job xi. 16, and read all the rest with comfort. How I have been forgetting the glorious natural history of Job—though I am thankful it is noted always in my books, but I want my own medicine now."

"(Sept. 14.)—Mont Blanc entirely clear all the morning, fresh snow in perfect light on the Dorons, and the Varens a miracle of aerial majesty. I, happy in a more solemn way than of old, read a bit of Ezra and referred to Haggai ii. 9: 'In this place will I give peace.'"

The travellers next turned to Italy. They went over the Cenis to Turin and thence to the sea. Successive entries in the diary record changing moods:—

"TURIN, *September 23*.—It was fairly fine all yesterday, but Alps hidden not by their own clouds, but by the filthy city, one pestilence now of noise and smoke, and I got fearfully sad and discouraged, not only by this, but by not caring the least any more for my old pets of pictures, and not being able to see the minerals in close dark rooms. Note the unique white amianth, two feet long, from Val d'Aosta, and the clear topaz with interior divisions of crystal like my pet quartz. It is fine this morning, and I must pluck up heart and do my best."

"PISA, *September 27*.—A really happy day's work in Baptistery and a walk."

"PISA, *September 29*.—Penny whistles from the railroad perpetual, and view of town from river totally destroyed by iron pedestrian bridge. Lay awake, very sad, from one to half-past four, but when I sleep, my dreams are now almost always pleasant, often very rational. A really rather beautiful one, of consoling an idiot youth who had been driven fierce, and making him

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 495.

gentle, might be a lesson about Italy. But what is Italy without her sky—or her religion ? ”

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“LUCCA (*Sunday, October 1*).—Yesterday received in the grey morning the news of the death of John Bunney, on that Saturday the 23rd on which I saw the bright Alps from his Italy. A heavy warning to me—were warning needed ; but I fear death too constantly, and feel it too fatally, as it is. Yesterday up the marble hills again, where, eight years ago, I lay down so happy under the rocks beyond the monastery, to read R.’s loving letter. Now, my strength half gone ; my hope, how changed.”

(*To MISS MARY GLADSTONE.*) “LUCCA, *Oct. 3.* . . . Such a walk as I had, the day before yesterday, on the marble hills which look to Pisa and the sea. It is a great grace of the olive, not enough thought on, that it does not hurt the grass underneath ; and on the shady grass banks and terraces beneath the grey and silver of the wild branches, the purple cyclamens are all out, not in showers merely, but *masses*, as thick as violets in spring—vividest pale red-purple, like light of evening. And it’s just chestnut fall time ; and where the olives and cyclamens end, the chestnuts begin, ankle-deep in places, like a thick, golden-brown moss, which the sunshine rests upon as if it loved it. Higher up come again the soft grass terraces, without the olives, swept round the hillsides as if all the people of Italy came there to sit and gaze at the sea, and Capraja and Gorgona.”

“FLORENCE, *Sunday, October 8.*—Slept well, but am terribly out of heart and purpose. Read in Machiavelli’s *Florence* Cosmo de’ Medici’s sad saying before his death—keeping his eyes shut, his wife asking why : ‘To get them into the way of it.’ Do the best I can in beginning opposite,<sup>1</sup> but I come to so few endings.”

“FLORENCE, *October 10.*—Yesterday up to Fésolé and found it quite uninjured, except restoration of Duomo, which did not matter. All the view of Florence in lovely sunshine, and beyond everything I ever remembered : certainly the view of all the world.”

The visit to Florence was chiefly important to Ruskin as the occasion of his making acquaintance with Miss Francesca

<sup>1</sup> A collection and arrangement of “the texts I have been in the habit of referring to as including most briefly the teaching of the Bible.”

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Alexander and her mother. He was introduced by their countryman, Mr. H. R. Newman, some of whose drawings he had bought for St. George's Museum. Miss Alexander during a long residence in Tuscany had collected ballads and songs, and from her friends among the peasantry had learnt many more. From these she made a selection, translating the songs or legends into English, and illustrating the MS. book with portraits, subject-pictures, views and floral designs in pen and ink. Miss Alexander first showed Ruskin *The Story of Ida*, which he bought, for the benefit of her charities, and obtained permission to publish. Then the book of *Tuscan Songs* was produced. Ruskin was fascinated by it, and this also was bought. "Well pleased with myself," he writes in his diary (Oct. 10), "for having bought Miss Alexander's book, showing all I want to say about Italian peasantry." He was equally pleased with himself for having won the friendship of the artist and her mother. "I never knew such vivid goodness and innocence in any living creatures," he wrote in his diary next day, "as in this Mrs. and Miss Alexander." The friendship ripened into affectionate sympathy; they became "Fratello" and "Sorella"; and his correspondence with Miss Alexander and her mother was one of the pleasures and consolations of his later years.

From Florence, Ruskin returned to Lucca—to meet Mr. E. R. Robson for the discussion of plans for the St. George's Museum,<sup>1</sup> and to finish some drawings of the Duomo:—

"LUCCA, October 25.—Yesterday worked very hard on pillar, and had nice little chat with two contadine, explaining my drawing and the cathedral front to them; one, presently (middle-aged, unfortunately, or more than middle), had her arm round my neck in her eagerness to know if I was going to draw the entire front. And the day before yesterday a pretty young housewife gave me a graceful good-day in passing up the steps before me."

Recollections of Ruskin linger still at Lucca, as I learn from a charming book which would greatly have pleased the editor of *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*. "The Lucchesi tell many an anecdote about the 'gran scrittore inglese,'

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 350.

who used to go about with a man bearing a ladder, and scale the façades and interiors of their churches, peering into all manner of nooks and crannies with strange persistency and devotion. And the landlady of the *Universo* will tell you, not without a touch of compassion in her voice, how the ‘povero Signor Collingwood’ was made to lie on his back, and copy the design on the ceiling of the master’s bedroom.”<sup>1</sup>

Having at last finished his drawings, Ruskin returned to Florence to bid good-bye to the Alexanders and Mr. Newman, and then, after a day or two more at Lucca, he went on to Pisa to meet Signor Boni and Signor Alessandri. They are “the two lads,” though indeed “not exactly lads perhaps,” in whose friendship and work Ruskin expressed his pride in the first of the Oxford lectures given in the following year.

On his way home Ruskin touched at Aix-les-Bains, and thence revisited Annecy. An entry in the diary shows that he was not always inaccessible to the charm of railway-train landscape which Louis Stevenson and many others have felt:<sup>2</sup>—

“(ANNECY, November 13.)—Yesterday an entirely divine railway coupé drive from Aix by the river gorges—one enchantment of golden trees and ruby hills.”

In the Hotel de l’Abbaye at Talloires, Ruskin shut himself up to write a lecture for the London Institution on Cistercian Architecture. Driven away presently by cold rain, he returned to Geneva, and thence rapidly home, reaching Herne Hill on December 2, and writing in his diary next day:—

“Slept well, and hope to be fit for lecture to-morrow; very happy in showing our drawings, and complete sense of rest after three months’ tossing.”

The lecture, afterwards printed under the title *Mending the Sieve*, was a great success. “Ruskin flourishes,”

<sup>1</sup> *In Tuscany*, by Montgomery Carmichael.

<sup>2</sup> See also Vol. I. p. 524, and above, p. 446.



CHAP. wrote Burne-Jones to Professor Norton—"gave a lecture  
XXVII. on Cistercian Architecture the other day that was like most ancient times, and of his very best, and looks well—really looks stronger than for many a year past. The hair that he has grown over his mouth hides that often angry feature, and his eyes look gentle and invite the unwary, who could never guess the dragon that lurks in the bush below."<sup>1</sup> The foreign tour had been in every way a success. It was the occasion, as we have seen, of recalling many pleasant impressions, which were presently to be embodied in one of the most charming of all his books. It was on this tour, also, that he made some of his best and furthest-carried drawings. Two of them, of details from the façade of the cathedral at Lucca (San Martino), are well known. One was at the "Old Masters" Exhibition at the Academy in 1901, and the other at the Royal Water-Colour Society's Ruskin Exhibition in the same year; and both were shown at the Fine Art Society's rooms in 1907. But the principal significance of the tour in the story of his life is that it so restored his health and spirits as to induce him to resume his former work at Oxford.

## II

"Before re-crossing the Alps," Ruskin says, "I had formed the hope of returning to my duties at Oxford."<sup>2</sup> He took steps to let his willingness to resume the Slade Professorship of Fine Art be known. His friend Sir William Richmond, whose tenure of the office had not yet expired, thereupon resigned, as we have heard already (p. 211), and in January 1883 Ruskin was re-elected. "Yesterday at evening," he wrote in his diary (Jan. 17, 1883), "came Acland's telegram, announcing reinstated Professorship: 'Dear Friend, may all good attend you and your work in this new condition; once again welcome to Alma Mater.'" The telegram reached him at Brantwood, and within a few

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii. p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to *The Limestone Alps of Savoy*.

days he had begun making notes for the course of lectures on "The Art of England."<sup>1</sup>

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In the Lent Term, however, he delivered only the first lecture—on Rossetti and Holman Hunt. The second was to be on Burne-Jones, and he went up to London to refresh his impressions of the body of his friend's work. "I want to reckon you up," he wrote; "it's like counting clouds." The lecture was delivered on May 12; two others followed it; and after them Ruskin stayed on for some weeks at Oxford, teaching in the drawing-school. He had gone up to London to give a private lecture (June 5), mainly on Miss Alexander's drawings, and on the following day he attended a performance of the *Tale of Troy*, and made a speech at its conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

During the summer he received many old friends at Brantwood; among them were Mr. and Mrs. La Touche and Professor Norton, who has given his impression on seeing Ruskin again after an interval of ten years:—

"I had left him in 1873 a man in vigorous middle life, young for his years, erect in figure, alert in action, full of vitality, with smooth face and untired eyes. I found him an old man, with look even older than his years, with bent form, with the beard of a patriarch, with habitual expression of weariness, with the general air and gait of age. But there were all the old affection and tenderness; the worn look readily gave way to the old animation, the delightful smile quickly kindled into full warmth; occasionally the unconquerable youthfulness of temperament reasserted itself

<sup>1</sup> He allowed himself also to be nominated a second time for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University. He had the usual fate of independent candidates, and was at the bottom of the poll. The figures were: Fawcett (Liberal), 797; Marquis of Bute (Conservative), 670; Ruskin, 319.

<sup>2</sup> "Mr. Ruskin, now seldom seen in public, watched this last representation with evident interest and frequent applause, and at the fall of the curtain consented

to join the *corps dramatique* in the green-room, and present Mr. George Alexander with their testimonial to his stage-management. Mr. Ruskin, who always seems able to say the best thing at the shortest notice, made a brief but excellent speech, and, with a few kindly words to the donee himself, handed him the book—a Shakespeare—as 'the guide to all that is noblest and truest in English thought'" (*World*, June 13, 1883).

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with entire control of manner and expression, and there were hours when the old gaiety of mood took possession of him with its irresistible charm. He had become, indeed, more positive, more absolute in manner, more irritable, but the essential sweetness prevailed.”<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn he visited Llangollen, in connexion with his intended book *Valle Crucis*, and later in the year he went to Scotland, spending a couple of days as the guest of Lord Reay at Laidlawstiel. An account of this visit by a fellow-guest has been printed by Grant-Duff:<sup>2</sup>—

“Mr. Ruskin (wrote Mr. Rutson to Grant-Duff) came to Laidlawstiel for two nights after I wrote to you. I was delighted with his courtesy and charming manner and his eloquence. We went to Ashestiel. You should have seen the reverent way in which he approached, with his hat off, an old man who had worked for Scott, and how he expressed his sense of the honour of seeing a man who had known Scott, and how the sense of his having known Scott must make the man himself very happy. All this, said in a low and rich tone of Ruskin’s beautiful voice, while he stood slightly bowed, made a memorable little picture, the man standing in his doorway, and Ruskin just outside the cottage. . . .”

In October Ruskin was again in Oxford delivering the last two of his lectures on *The Art of England*, and attending in his drawing-school. A lecture given during the same term at Oxford by William Morris, in which he avowed his Socialist opinions, excited much notice and some anger, and Ruskin was present at it. Morris explained at the outset that “its true subject was art under a plutocracy.” Some of the College and University authorities, who were present at the lecture, rose at its conclusion to dissociate themselves from the lecturer’s political views. Ruskin followed in an *impromptu* speech. “Mr. Ruskin,” says a report, “whose appearance was the signal for immense enthusiasm, speaking of the lecturer as ‘the great conceiver and doer, the man at once a poet, an artist, and a workman, and his old and dear friend,’ said that he agreed with him

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of John Ruskin to C. E. Norton*, vol. ii. p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *Notes from a Diary, 1881–1886*, vol. i. pp. 186–187.

in 'imploing the young men who were, being educated here to seek in true unity and love one for another the best direction for the great forces which, like an evil aurora, were lighting the world, and thus to bring about the peace which passeth all understanding.'"<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin's lectures had been issued in Parts as they were delivered, and in the following year the volume was completed by an additional chapter. They were written under promise, as it were, of good behaviour. He struck this note in the first of them, when he proceeded to relieve the minds of his audience from "unhappily too well-grounded panic," and to assure them that he had "no intention of making his art lectures any more one-half sermons." Among his objects was to give "some permanently rational balance between the rhapsodies of praise and blame" which had been printed in connexion with the exhibition of Rossetti's works at the Royal Academy in the winter of 1883, and the tone which he adopted was throughout "advisedly courteous." Always urbane in private intercourse, Ruskin knew well—no writer perhaps better—how to be the same—when he chose—on paper; and these lectures are a principal example of his more polite and courtly style. Their felicity in praise, their adroitness—sometimes in selection, sometimes in reserve—their delicate touch—now of flattery, and now in censure—must, I think, strike every reader. To the friends, and to the friends of the friends, whose work Ruskin had occasion to praise, the lectures gave the liveliest pleasure. Mr. Holman Hunt wrote to Ruskin expressing in the most generous terms the help which he had derived from the praises of his friend. The lecture on Mr. Hunt's "Triumph of the Innocents" gave fresh confidence to the artist's patrons, and encouraged the artist himself to persevere with the completion both of the original design and of the second version painted from it. Upon the work of Burne-Jones Ruskin did not say within the necessary limits of time all that he had hoped; but the appreciation, as it stood, even in a compressed report in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, greatly pleased the artist's friends. "A spirit moves me," wrote

<sup>1</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, Nov. 19, 1883.



CHAP. XXVII. Mr. Swinburne to his friend in the "palace of painting," "to write a line to you, not of congratulation (which would be indeed an absurd impertinence), on the admirable words which I have just read in this evening's paper's report of Ruskin's second Oxford lecture, but to tell you how glad I was to read them. If I may venture to say as much without presumption, I never did till now read anything in praise of your work that seemed to me really and perfectly apt and adequate. I do envy Ruskin the authority and the eloquence which give such weight and effect to his praise. It is just what I 'see in a glass darkly' that he brings out and lights up with the very best words possible; while we others (who cannot draw), like Shakespeare, have eyes for wonder but lack tongues to praise."<sup>1</sup>

### III

Ruskin did not again reside in Oxford till the Michaelmas Term of 1884, but he kept in touch with the drawing-school by sending instructions and exercises through Mr. Macdonald. Meanwhile he was as busy as ever, or busier. In February he came up to London and delivered at the London Institution, with full vigour, two lectures which he presently published as *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*. In reading these lectures it is well to distinguish Ruskin's account of the phenomena from any theory of their cause. At the time when they were first reported, the lectures encountered much ridicule. He had not clearly propounded any theory, or at any rate not any physical theory, of the phenomena in question. He contented himself with ascribing them to the Devil; and, wrapping himself as it were in the gloom, the Prophet denounced woe upon a wicked and perverse generation. There was a perfectly sober, solid, material, and accurate sense in which Ruskin's words were true. But he was not fully conscious of it himself, or he did not choose to make it explicit; and his readers, not penetrating to the true cause, were led by Ruskin's prophecies of

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii, p. 132.

woe to throw doubt and derision even upon the phenomena on which he based them. The newspapers, as he says in his Preface, "scouted his assertion of radical change, during recent years, in weather aspect as imaginary or insane." Nothing could be worse-founded than such criticism. Ruskin was before all things a close and accurate observer of natural phenomena. For fifty years, he says, he had made patient and accurately recorded observations of the sky. Few men have ever studied so many sunsets, and perhaps no man has ever studied so many sunrises, as Ruskin. It was in an aside at one of these lectures that he made the remark, already cited, that he kept his skies "bottled like his father's sherries"—bottled in minute descriptions in his diary, or memoranda in his sketch-books. It was in 1871 that he "first recognized the clouds brought by the plague-wind as distinct in character." From that time forward, he says, his attention "never relaxed in its record of the phenomena."<sup>1</sup> His diaries are full of it, and many notes upon it occur in his books. His observations of the phenomena of "the storm-cloud" were accurate. Nor is there any mystery about their origin. The Devil is every bit as black as Ruskin painted him; he is Smoke—smoke, mixed with damp. "Air currents meet the gaseous products of combustion, mixed with minute material particles, and are hindered or diverted in their course thereby, and move forward, dirty, irregular, and scattered. It would appear as though the upper air did not always have time to become cleansed each day from the gases and carbon which rise into it; there is not enough free space at hand, and an unclean atmosphere blocks what was once the serene expanse of the sky." The writer from whose recent work on the subject I am quoting,<sup>2</sup> adds that industrial statistics fully bear out the date which Ruskin fixes for the growth of

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to find that another artist-observer, who had also been in the habit for many years of noting cloud-phenomena, entirely corroborated Ruskin's statements: see G. D. Leslie's *Letters to Marco*, pp. 201, 209.

<sup>2</sup> *The Destruction of Daylight: a Study in the Smoke Problem*, by J. W. Graham, Principal of Dalton Hall, University of Manchester (George Allen, 1907).

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the phenomena in question; the storm-cloud thickened just when the consumption of coal went up by leaps and bounds, both in this country and in the industrialised parts of central Europe. The distance which the blight of the plague-wind will travel is, it should be noted, very great.<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, at the conclusion of his lectures, says that the plague-wind and the storm-cloud will only be removed when men sincerely pray that "God may be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us." The investigations of meteorologists and economists confirm his words; it is the Devil of Smoke that needs to be exorcised.

#### IV

The lectures on *The Storm Cloud* were delivered on Feb. 4 and 11, but Ruskin had much else to do in London. Some of the girl-students at the Royal Academy had asked him for tickets for his lectures. He replied that the Storm Cloud would be of no particular interest to them; but would they think him very forward if he invited himself to take a cup of tea with them and talk over their art-studies? The tea-party was held, and in return he invited his hosts, and any other girl-students they might choose to bring with them, to tea with Mr. and Mrs. Severn and himself at Herne Hill. On this latter occasion he delivered an informal Address, with which he had taken some trouble, "going all over the National Gallery," he said, "to note points for it."<sup>2</sup> During the same visit to London, he gave some sittings to Miss Kate Greenaway, but the portrait was never completed. He went to pantomimes and theatres, and among other performances saw with great pleasure Wilson Barrett's *Claudian*. But his principal occupation in London at this time, and afterwards at Brantwood, was the arrangement and cataloguing of a section of the minerals at the Natural History Museum. Ruskin was constantly in and out of the Museum, and Mr. Fletcher, then keeper of the minerals, would sometimes ask his advice upon the more artistic

<sup>1</sup> See *Ruskin Relics*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Sun*, April 8, 1900.

arrangement of particular cases or specimens. The following letter shows how pleased Ruskin was at being allowed to take some of the chalcedonies in hand, for an arrangement of his "very own," as the children say:—

(1882.)—"DEAR MR. FLETCHER,—Forgive me if I snap too like a puppy at the lovely morsel you offered me just as I was going away yesterday—the rearrangement of the chalcedonies. They are such pretty things—such strange ones, and such *findable* ones—that of all minerals, *they*, it seems to me, ought to be most recommended to the public notice. A schoolboy can't pick up diamonds or topazes or rock-crystals on Brighton beach, or even, for the asking, on St. Michael's Mount; but every other flint he breaks may have a bit of chalcedony in it, and I've had more *hunting* pleasure out of it (sponge-saturating or cell-lining) than in any other mineral whatever. . . ."

Broken health, and other work, interfered with this chalcedony catalogue; and when the task was resumed in 1884, it took a different form. Ruskin, it was agreed, should arrange a special case, containing a series of specimens of the more common forms of Native Silica, and should write a catalogue of his own, descriptive of them. He entered upon the enjoyment of this pleasant morsel with great gusto—working in Mr. Fletcher's room, and supplementing specimens already in the Museum with many from his own collection. It says much for the Keeper's diplomacy that Ruskin submitted with complete amiability to the suggestions and corrections of superior authority, indulging occasionally in outbursts always friendly and often playful. "What's Hemi-morphite?" he wrote (July 18, 1884), "and how dare you use such words to me?" "I shall write it Half-formite," he declared in a subsequent note. Mr. Fletcher had told him that one of the specimens of Silica had been presented to the Museum by Count Apollos de Moussin Poushkin. Ruskin feared that the whole case was now "sure to be called the Roushkin-Poushkin Case." The collection remains, as Ruskin arranged it, in the Pavilion at the far end of the Mineral Gallery; and any one who will spend an



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hour there with Ruskin's Catalogue will learn how much insight Ruskin had for the beauty and the mystery of stones.

Ruskin spent the summer of 1884 at Brantwood, finishing the Catalogue and full of other work and plans. He was in correspondence about a Life of Turner, for which he was to arrange materials, with M. Chesneau. He was bringing out Miss Alexander's *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*, writing a catalogue for a collection of minerals at Kirkcudbright, throwing off an occasional number of *Fors Clavigera*, and doing many bye-things besides. He had recovered his strength, but he was spending it fast. He enjoyed the pursuit, but it sometimes left him breathless. "Quite bright always," he wrote in the diary (May 26); "I wonderfully well, and slept well; but to-day trembling and nervous with too much on my mind—all pleasant; but Minerals, Turner's life, the Saints, and Oxford Lectures, with instant *Proserpina*—five subjects, like this,  $\begin{array}{ccc} \downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow \\ \uparrow & \uparrow & \end{array}$  with poor me in the middle." He was sixty-five, but he was still up at sunrise in the mornings; and St. Sebastian called only for more arrows. "Bolton [Turner's drawing] so bright in last night's sunset! What shall I do," he asks himself (June 29), "with all my powers and havings, still left?" Why, launch out on new work, to be sure! "Planned more work on pretty things" (July 2). "Planned much this morning (July 12)—Grammar of Adamant, Grammar of Sapphire, Grammar of Flint, Grammar of Ice." He had pleasant visitors in the later summer—Mrs. La Touche, again, and Professor Norton, and Mrs. Burne-Jones, with her daughter, and Mr. Fletcher. Jowett, too, then Vice-Chancellor of the University, visited him. "I should wish," wrote Jowett, "never to lose the impression of the kind welcome which I received"; and the pleasure was mutual. "Vice-Chancellor came yesterday," Ruskin notes (September 10)—"very nice"; and again (September 12), "Yesterday most pleasant walk with Vice-Chancellor." But, meanwhile, his lectures for the ensuing term at Oxford were in arrear, and this was to be a cause of much trouble in the immediate future.

During the term at Oxford, sufficiently exciting in itself, he made occasional visits to London. He breakfasted sometimes with Leighton, with whom he was co-operating in the collection of drawings by Turner, with which the new water-colour gallery at the Royal Academy was to be opened at the forthcoming "Old Masters" exhibition.

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## V

Of the manner and reception of his earlier Oxford lectures, account has been given already (Ch. X). The lectures of his second professorship excited even greater interest in the University. There were overflowing audiences, and the lectures were largely reported in the press.<sup>1</sup> The first course—on *The Art of England*—had been carefully written; there were few asides, and the lectures were restrained in tone and closely restricted in scope. With the second course, which he entitled *The Pleasures of England*, it all went very differently; and as the lectures proceeded, the strain of lecturing without full preparation, the controversial nature of the thoughts in his mind, the stimulus of the crowded lecture-room, the remonstrances of his friends, and some disputes then current in the University, combined to work Ruskin up into a dangerous state of excitement. The crush, when his lectures were resumed, was as great as before. A letter written to a girl who had asked for a ticket, is typical of Ruskin's pretty way of saying things:—

"I wonder if you're little enough to go in my breast pocket! I don't in the least know how else to get you in. For I've made a Medo-Persic-Arabic-Moorish-Turkish law that no strangers nor pilgrims are to get into the lectures at all, but only Oxford residents, and even so they can't all get in that want to. Look here,

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<sup>1</sup> An account of one of the lectures, giving a vivid idea of the impression made by them on Ruskin's more emotional hearers, may be read in "Happy Memories of John Ruskin," by L. Allen Harker, in *The Puritan*, May 1900.

CHAP. the first lecture, which is next Saturday, will be rather dull, but  
XXVII. if you could come on Saturday the 25th, I would take you in myself under my gown, and get you into a corner."<sup>1</sup>

The scope of this second course was very wide, being nothing less than a sketch of the tendencies of national life and character as shown in "The Pleasures of England" during centuries of her history. There was here nothing to check the range of Ruskin's discursiveness, or restrain the violence of his feelings, and he let himself go freely. The first two lectures were in type before the course began, and in these the line of thought was clear. Two more, which had not been completely written, were yet prepared, though the asides became more and more frequent. He allowed himself greater license in colloquial banter even than was usual with him in his Oxford lectures. The digressions and interpolations sometimes contained passages of serious and telling eloquence. I remember one such in the lecture on "The Pleasures of Faith," when he turned aside from his manuscript notes to refer to General Gordon as a Latter-day Saint whose life still illustrates the age of faith. We are too much in the habit, he had been saying, of "supposing that temporal success is owing either to worldly chance or to worldly prudence, and is never granted in any visible relation to states of religious temper"—as if the whole story of the world, read in the light of Christian faith, did not show "a vividly real yet miraculous tenour" in the contrary direction! "But what need to go back in the story of the world when you can see the same evidence in the history of to-day—in the lives and characters of men like Havelock and Gordon?" Often, too, he would lay aside his manuscript at some important point, and giving free play to his feelings, drive it home in burning passages of extempore irony. But at other times there was a lack of restraint. He was behind-hand, as I have said, with the preparation of his lectures, and sometimes he could not even get through the regulation hour by Charles Lamb's expedient of making up for

<sup>1</sup> "Happy Memories of John Ruskin," as cited above.

beginning late by ending early. I remember one occasion during the course when he found some difficulty in eking out the time, even with the help of copious extracts from himself and Carlyle; but he kept his audience in good humour by confessing to some "bad shots" in previous lectures; by telling them that all pretty girls were angels; by abusing "the beastly hooter" that woke them every morning, and assuring them that, in spite of appearances, he "really was not humbugging them."<sup>1</sup>

The popularity of the lectures, the applause, the excitement, were in no way diminished—perhaps, as an undergraduate audience is not the most judicious in the world, they were rather increased—by the great man's vagaries. This encouraged Ruskin to discard the work of preparation, and to trust more and more to improvisation. "Lecture fluent," he notes in his diary (November 18), "but very forgetful." At the same time the topics were becoming more and more disturbing to his equanimity. The lecture on "Protestantism" had not been much prepared, but the delivery of it—as might be expected from the subject—caused great stir in his audience; there was a strong contingent of Catholics present, and they cheered loudly the winged words of their fiery ally. Ruskin had always been fond of spicing his lectures with surprise-packets in the matter of illustrations. The little jest in this kind with which he ended the lecture on "Protestantism" created, if much amusement among the undergraduates, yet amazement and scandal among their grave and reverend seniors. Carpaccio's St. Ursula had been shown as "a type of Catholic witness." What, he went on to ask, shall be the types and emblems to represent the spirit of Protestantism? Amidst breathless excitement the Professor proceeded to untie two pictures

<sup>1</sup> It must have been this, or the lecture on Protestantism, that Sir Hubert von Herkomer heard: "It was painful to his friends who loved and revered him, who so plainly saw how he played to the gallery, how, in the perversity of spirit that sometimes overtook

that brilliant mind, he seemed only to wish to arouse hilarity amongst the undergraduates, who did not know him. . . . Immediately he escaped from the crowd he was a changed man, a man of infinite sorrow and sadness" (*The Herkomers*, vol. ii. p. 87).



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lying on the table before him. There are two aspects, he went on to say, of the Protestant spirit—the spirit when it is earnest, and the spirit when it is hypocritical. “This,” he exclaimed, “is the earnest spirit”; and he showed to an audience, which held its sides, an enlargement of a pig by Bewick. “It is a good little pig,” he remarked patronisingly; “a pig which is alert and knows its own limited business. It has a clever snout, eminently adapted to dig up and worry things, and it stands erect and keen, with a knowing curl in its tail, on its own native dunghill.” The hypocritical type was Mr. Stiggins, with his shabby gloves, and a concertina. The jest might have passed in the privacy of a class-room; but the lectures were reported in the London papers, and in leading articles a call was made for some kindly and benevolent veto to be placed upon “an academic farce.”<sup>1</sup> The subjects of the next lectures had been announced as “The Pleasures of Sense” (Science) and “The Pleasures of Nonsense” (Atheism). Ruskin had let it be known among his friends that he meant to devote these discourses to lashing the men of science, and to intervening in the discussion on vivisection, which was then agitating the University in connexion with a proposal for a physiological laboratory. He was persuaded, sorely against his will, to cancel the lectures, and substitute others on less controversial topics. Various letters of his have been published in which he refers to the scientific party in the University as intervening in panic to stop his mouth. “I have been thrown a week out in all my plans,” he wrote to Miss Beever (December 1), “by having to write two new lectures, instead of those the University was frightened at. The scientists slink out of my way now, as if I was a mad dog.” It need not be supposed that Ruskin meant his remarks to be taken quite literally. In fact, the interposition had come not from opponents but from friends—such as Sir Henry Acland, Mr. Macdonald, and Jowett—and it was made in the interest of his own health, rather

<sup>1</sup> See especially a pungent article in *The World* of November 19, 1884, thus headed.

than in a desire to shield the scientists from his assaults. His private conversation at this time betrayed high mental tension; his behaviour was not free from eccentricity. On one occasion he obtained permission from the Dean to have the cathedral closed to the public, that he might roam up and down and listen to the organ; but even so, his perturbed spirit found little rest. He was much with Jowett, who "entertained him in his house with a watchful and almost tender courtesy," which left on those who saw the two men together "an indelible impression."<sup>1</sup> What his friends feared was that Ruskin might quite break down under a continuation of the strain. With the postponement—*sine die*, as it was destined to be—of the lectures on "Sense" and "Nonsense," the danger was past. That the danger existed is confessed by a good resolve registered three weeks later in his diary: "I must never stir out of quiet work more" (December 23). The last two of the substituted lectures—on "Birds" and "Landscape" respectively—were full of charm, and had a great success. "I gave my fourteenth and last for this year," he wrote to Miss Beever (December 1), "with vigour and effect, and am safe and well, D.G." Two other addresses, however, he gave at Oxford. One was to the members of the St. George's Guild; the other was at a meeting of the Anti-Vivisection Society on December.

The book containing the lectures, thus interrupted—*The Pleasures of England*—remained a fragment. There are those who have regretted, with some bitterness, that "some of Ruskin's force which might have been spent in masterly analysis of mediæval aims and aspirations," was diverted by the interference of friends to "courteous tone of

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, by Evelyn Abbott and Lewis Campbell, 1897, vol. ii. p. 75. To like effect, another observer: "The Master—of whom Ruskin always spoke as the 'sweetest of men'—was singularly happy in his influence, gently and

imperceptibly leading the conversation away from dangerous or over-exciting topics, and directing his numerous enthusiasms into channels least likely to be disturbing to the peace of the University" ("Happy Memories of John Ruskin," as cited above).

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comment on contemporary work.”<sup>1</sup> This is as it may be; but it is certainly much to be regretted that Ruskin never adequately fulfilled the scheme of these later lectures. Their intention was to tell in broad outline the history of the making of Christian England, and the theme was to be illustrated at each stage by reference to the arts of successive epochs, as reflecting and satisfying the popular instincts; hence, as Ruskin explains, the title—*The Pleasures of England*. The execution of this scheme, even as far as it was carried, is fragmentary, and the illustrative references to the arts of the time are less abundant than a reader could wish. It should be remembered, however, that at the actual lectures many photographs, drawings, and illuminated manuscripts were shown. The book found a very sympathetic reader in Cardinal Manning, who told Ruskin that he had “read the four lectures with pleasure and delight.” Ruskin’s own verdict was delivered to Professor Norton: “I’m pretty well forward with the lectures,—but they’re not up to my best work.”

On leaving Oxford, Ruskin went for a day or two to Cheltenham, and then to pay a long-promised visit to Farnley<sup>2</sup>—partly in connexion with the loan of Turner drawings for the exhibition, referred to above. Mrs. Fawkes describes her guest as “seeming very worn and tired out,” but full of interesting talk. From Farnley Ruskin returned to Brantwood, intending to complete the interrupted course at Oxford during the ensuing term. He first prepared for press the third and the fourth of the lectures already delivered, and these were duly published in February and April. He also was at work on the fifth of the lectures,

<sup>1</sup> See an admirable appreciation of the book in the *Architectural Review* of December 1898. “The superb manner,” says the writer (“H. R.”), “in which the 1000 years are told, leaves one full of ungrateful but irresistible regrets that this is all we shall ever get now from his pen. I close the book—and the story of the battle of Civitella in the cadence of his

utterance, wise, wilful, and tender, floats round my ears an aureole of memory. . . . His political economy—his biographies are his alone. The bits of history inlaid in his writings—in *Fors Clavigera* especially—can never be continued, will never be repeated. Ruskin stands with the poets.”

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 290.



and fully intended to write and deliver the sixth and the seventh. On March 10, however, "the vote endowing vivisection" was passed,<sup>1</sup> and Ruskin, in wrath and vexation of spirit, shook the dust of his feet off against the University for ever. The letter in which he conveyed his resignation to the Vice-Chancellor has never seen the light, but Ruskin referred to it in a letter given below. He resigned on March 22, and in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of April 21 it was suggested that Ruskin, in his sixty-seventh year, might well feel that the adequate discharge of the duties of the professorship were no longer compatible with "a just estimate of decline in the energy of advancing age,"<sup>2</sup> and that the resignation would give him leisure to complete his numerous books in the press and to write his autobiography. Four days later the following letter from him appeared in the same newspaper:—

"BRANTWOOD, *April 24* [1885].—SIR,—By mischance I have not till to-day seen your kindly-meant paragraphs on my resignation of the Slade Professorship at Oxford. Yet, permit me at once to correct the impression under which they were written. Whatever may be my failure in energy or ability, the best I could yet do was wholly at the service of Oxford; nor would any other designs, or supposed duties, have interfered for a moment with the perfectly manifest duty of teaching in Oxford as much art as she gave her students time to learn. I meant to die in my harness there, and my resignation was placed in the Vice-Chancellor's hands on the Monday following the vote endowing vivisection in the University, solely in consequence of that vote, with distinct statement to the Vice-Chancellor, intended to be read in Convocation, of its being so. This statement I repeated in a letter intended for publication in the *University Gazette*, and sent to its office a fortnight since. Neither of these letters, so far as I know, has yet been made public. It is sufficient proof, however, how far it was

<sup>1</sup> For some particulars on this subject, see Sir Henry Acland's Preface of 1893 to *The Oxford Museum*. The final circulars issued on the two sides (the one against the grant being signed by Ruskin),

and a report of the debate and division, are in the *Times* of March 9 and 11, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> From the "Advice" of July 1882, issued with the list of his Works.



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contrary to my purpose to retire from the Slade Professorship that I applied in March of last year for a grant to build a well-lighted room for the undergraduates, apart from the obscure and inconvenient Ruskin school; and to purchase for its furniture the two Yorkshire drawings by Turner of Crook of Lune and Kirkby Lonsdale—grants instantly refused on the plea of the University's being in debt."

A few weeks later I reverted to the subject in conversation with Ruskin, and he said oracularly, "Double motives are very useful things; you can do a thing for two that you couldn't for one"; and it is difficult to say which had had the most weight with him, the University's refusal of what he had wanted, or its concession of what he disapproved. He had already in another way visited upon the University its sin, if such it were, of refusing to add any more drawings by Turner to its collections. By a will dated October 23, 1883, he had bequeathed to the Bodleian Library his books, his portrait of the Doge Andrea Gritti by Titian, and the choicest of his Turner drawings. On June 4, 1884, he revoked this bequest. After December 1884, he never set foot in Oxford again.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *PRÆTERITA*

(1885-1889)

“Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note may yet be done.”—TENNYSON.

#### I

ON returning to Brantwood, after his resignation at Oxford, Ruskin took stock of his position:—

(To C. E. NORTON.) “BRANTWOOD, 2nd January, 1885.—I am not so well as you hoped, having overstrained myself under strong impulse at Oxford, and fallen back now into a ditch of despond, deepened by loss of appetite and cold feet, and dark weather,—Joan in London, and people all about more or less depending on me; no S. or M. for me to depend on—no Charles—no Carlyle; even my Turners for the time speechless to me, my crystals lustreless. After some more misery and desolation of this nature I hope, however, to revive slowly, and will really not trust myself in that feeling of power any more. But it seems to me as if old age were threatening to be a weary time for me. I’ll never mew about it like Carlyle, nor make Joanie miserable if I know it—but it looks to me very like as if I should take to my bed and make everybody wait on me. This is only to send you love—better news I hope soon.”

He did revive, and four years, with a little of a fifth, remained to him before the beginning of the eternal silence. Ruskin’s last literary period is rendered notable by the writing of his autobiographical fragment, *Præterita*, which many readers account the most charming of his books.

CHAP. XXVIII. The writing of it gave him pleasure, and these years contained many months of other fruitful labour and contented peace. They were broken by repeated attacks of illness, and after each recovery Ruskin was haunted by the dread of another failure. Yet also after each recovery he could not yet bring himself to rust unburnished. "I think," he wrote to Mr. Holman Hunt (Oct. 21, 1885), "there is time to win another battle, as Napoleon said at Marengo, and Friedrich's Torgau was won at midnight with half his army lost."

In view of the interruptions from illness, the amount of work which Ruskin was able to accomplish during these years is considerable. *Præterita* was the main task; it appeared in separate Parts, each Part containing a chapter, at intervals between July 1885 and July 1889; but in the same year (1885) which saw the beginning of that book, he also wrote and published *A Knight's Faith*. This introduces us to one of Ruskin's less generally known interests. A reader, he says, "would not have guessed from my general writings that I have been a constant and careful student of battles." He used, it seems, to invent battles "geometrically on known dispositions of ground for his own pleasure," and in all his mixed reading took careful notes of the conduct of campaigns. He had intended to summarise his studies in an abstract of the battles of Frederick the Great. That remained one of his many unwritten books, and *A Knight's Faith* is the only work in which this side of his interests comes to the front. The Knight who is the subject of the book was Sir Herbert Edwardes, one of the most brilliant members of what may be called the school of Lawrence. After the Second Sikh War (1849) Edwardes came to England on leave for the benefit of his health, and he was married during his stay to Miss Emma Sidney. She was a stepdaughter of Dr. Grant, the "affectionate physician" of Ruskin's father, and she and her husband were on terms of friendly intimacy with the household at Denmark Hill. It was during this period that Edwardes wrote and published his experiences during *A Year on the Punjab Frontier, 1848-1849*. This is the

book of which Ruskin gave a condensation with running summary or comment in *A Knight's Faith*. He chose Edwardes as a type of the noblest sort of soldier-administrator. As such, this study fills an essential place in the body of Ruskin's work. He had urged in *Fors Clavigera*, as a vital element in any sound system of education, the study of famous knights; it is the study of “A Knight's Faith” that is here told—of faith in the sense “of trust not only in the protection of God, but in the nobleness and kindness of men.” This is the lesson which Edwardes himself most desired that readers should draw from his book. *A Knight's Faith* may thus be called a commentary on one of the articles of “St. George's Creed”—“I trust in the nobleness of human nature.” Edwardes was a first-rate fighter; and Ruskin found, in the whole range of battles from Marathon to Inkerman, no positions “so absolutely swift, ingenious, and successful” as his; but it is principally on the bloodless victories of his hero that Ruskin dwells. In this book<sup>1</sup> he says, “you will see how a Christian British officer can, and does verily, and with his whole heart, keep in order such part of India as may be entrusted to him, and, in so doing, secure our Empire.” The passages with which he closes his Preface and the book itself are a noble tribute to a noble character:—

“I have only to add that, although I have been happy in the friendship both of Sir Herbert and Lady Edwardes, my republication of this piece of military history is not in the least a matter of personal feeling with me;—it is done simply because I know it to be good for the British public to learn, and to remember, how a decisive soldier and benevolent governor can win the affection of the wildest races, subdue the treachery of the basest, and bind the anarchy of dissolute nations,—not with walls of fort or prison, but with the living roots of Justice and Love. I do not, by any words of mine, think to deepen the impression made on you by those of the Christian hero, whose Heaven-guarded life you have watched through every danger to victory. But I may tell you that the most grave personal lesson I ever received from friendship,

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<sup>1</sup> *Pleasures of England*, § 80.



CHAP. was when Sir Herbert Edwardes read to me, in my father's  
XXVIII. house, Wordsworth's poem of the 'Happy Warrior,' and showed me that it was no symbol of imaginary character, but the practical description of what every soldier ought to be. Such, in truth, and to the utmost, were Havelock—Lawrence—Edwardes,—and (he himself would have added) many more of the sons of Sacred England, who went forth for her, not only conquering, and to conquer, but saving, and to save. Crusaders these indeed,—now resting all of them on their red-cross shields among the dead—but who may yet see, as the stars see in their courses, the Moabite Ruth, and the Arab Hagar, look up from their desolation to their Mother of England; saying,—'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God!'"

Having finished *A Knight's Faith* Ruskin turned to another and a more exciting task. This was an Introduction to a tract by Mr. R. G. Sillar on *Usury and the English Bishops*. Ruskin's point of view is explained in a letter of the time:

(To T. PARTON.) "BRANTWOOD, 10th March, '85.—I am extremely obliged by your letter, and more than glad that people begin to care what I think or say. When I wrote *Unto this Last*, and *Munera*, in 1860 and 1862, I had not studied the subject of usury, and was under the usual impression that moderate interest was harmless. It was Mr. Sillar who showed me the truth—and in all my *Fors* teaching, Usury is blamed in its essence,—as murder is—though the necessity of it for some time yet under existing conditions is granted also as of War,—the members of the St. George's Guild only vow to get quit of it as much and as soon as they can. A pamphlet by Mr. Sillar is just coming out (with introduction by me), of which the contents will I think surprise many."

On this point, in his days of crusading under "St. George's" banner, his sincerity was often assailed. He preached that interest was wrong; but in practice he received interest from Bank Stock. Such criticisms came sometimes from disciples with troubled heads; at others, from hostile critics who are ever delighted to defend a

system by pointing to an individual's acceptance of it. CHAP. XXVIII.  
 Ruskin meets the objection frankly, and with cogency. "I hold bank stock," he said, "simply because I suppose it to be safer than any other stock, and I take the interest of it because, though taking interest is, in the abstract, as wrong as war, the entire fabric of society is at present so connected with both usury and war that it is not possible violently to withdraw, nor wisely to set example of withdrawing, from either evil." Social evils, in other words, are not to be cured by individual remedies. Ruskin was content "to know his principle, and to work steadily towards better fulfilment of it."<sup>1</sup>

## II

The literary work described above often brought peace and pleasure to Ruskin. "A white day," he writes in his diary (Feb. 5, 1885), "getting Sir Herbert's book all planned and the first chapter sent to press (most of it now done), and embroideries sent to Irish school." And, again, "Yesterday (May 3) sent to printer the last sheets of *Songs of Tuscany*, very thankful to have been spared to finish them rightly. Strong at work in every direction, and wonderfully content in it, *D. G.*" A day in his life at this still busy time is described in a letter to Miss Greenaway:—

"BRANTWOOD,  $\frac{1}{4}$  past two p.m., 13th Feb., '85.—Am I busy? Well, you shall hear just what I've done to-day.

"7— $\frac{1}{2}$  past. Coffee. Read Northcote's Conversations, marking extracts for lectures.— $\frac{1}{2}$  7—8. Dress.—8— $\frac{1}{2}$  past. Write two pages of autobiography.— $\frac{1}{2}$  8— $\frac{1}{4}$ —9. Lesson to Jane Anne,<sup>2</sup> on spelling and aspiration. Advise her to get out of the habit of spelling 'at,' 'hat.'— $\frac{1}{4}$ —9—half-past. Correct press of chapter of *Modern Painters*.<sup>3</sup>— $\frac{1}{2}$  9— $\frac{1}{2}$  10. Breakfast—read letters—devise answers to smash a bookseller, and please an evangelical clergyman—also to make Kate understand what I'm about, and put Joan's mind at ease. . . .  $\frac{1}{2}$  10. Set to work again. Finished

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letters 21, 44.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 512.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 518.

CHAP. revise of *M. P.* chapter. Then took up Miss Alex., next number.  
 XXVIII. Fitted pages, etc., wrote to Miss A. to advise her of proof coming. Wrote to Clergyman and Joan and smashed bookseller.— $\frac{1}{2}$  12. Resumed chess game by correspondence. Sent enemy a move. Don't think she's much chance left.—1. Looked out some crystals, 'Irish Diamonds' for School at Cork. Meditated over enclosed mistress and pupils' letter—still to be answered before resting. Query—how?— $\frac{1}{4}$  past one. Lunch. Pea soup.— $\frac{1}{4}$  to two. Meditate letter to Colonel Brackenbury on the *Bride of Abydos*. Meditate what's to be said to Kate.—2. Baxter comes in—receives directions for manifold parcels and Irish diamonds. Think I may as well write this, thus.—Wild rainy day. Wrote Col. Brackenbury while your ink was drying to turn leaves—now for Irish Governess, and my mineralogist—and that's all!"

Ruskin's friendship with Miss Kate Greenaway filled a large part in his later life. It sprung from his admiration of her "fancy, unrivalled in its range," which was "re-establishing throughout gentle Europe the manners and customs of fairyland."<sup>1</sup> There was something of fairyland—with its idealising grace and its pretty play—in their friendship. In person, indeed, Miss Greenaway was the least "Kate Greenawayish" of mortals, and she was already thirty-seven when Ruskin first saw her. But in character—"mixed child and woman," as he said of her—she appealed strongly to him, and a friendship, founded on mutual admiration, ripened rapidly. He had been captivated by the original drawings for *Under the Window*, and expressed his admiration to her friend, Stacy Marks, who encouraged him to write to her. This he did in a letter of charming fantasy, behind which some shrewd advice may already be discerned:—

"BRANTWOOD, 6th Jan. 1880.—MY DEAR MISS GREENAWAY,—I lay awake half (no, a quarter) of last night, thinking of the hundred things I want to say to you—and never shall get said!—and I'm giddy and weary, and now can't say even half or a quarter out of the hundred. They're about you—and your gifts—and your

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<sup>1</sup> *Art of England*, § 112.

graces, and your fancies, and your—yes, perhaps one or two little tiny—faults; and about other people—children and grey-haired—and what you could do for them—if you once made up your mind for whom you would do it—for children *only*, for instance? or for old people—*me*, for instance—and of children and old people—whether for those of 1880—only—or of 18—8—9—10—11—12—20—0—0—0—0—etc., etc., etc. Or, more simply, Annual or Perennial?

“Well, of the 1000 things—it was nearer a thousand than a hundred—this is anyhow the first. Will you please tell me whether you can only draw these things out of your head, or could—if you chose—draw them with the necessary modifications from nature? For instance: Down in Kent the other day, I saw many more lovely farmhouses—many more pretty landscapes—than any in your book. But the farms had—perhaps—a steam-engine in the yard—the landscapes a railroad in the valley. Now, do you never want to draw such houses and places—as they used to be—and might be? That’s No. 1.

“No. 2 of the thousand. Do you only draw pretty children out of your head? In my parish school there are at least twenty prettier than any in your book—but they are in costumes neither graceful nor comic—they are not like blue china—they are not like mushrooms;—they are like—very ill-dressed Angeli. Could you draw groups of these as they *are*?

“No. 3 of the thousand. Did you ever see a book called *Flitters, Tatters, and the Counsellor*?

“No. 4 of the thousand. Do you ever see blue sky? and when you do, do you like it?

“No. 5. Is a witches’ ride on a broomstick the only chivalry you think it desirable to remind the glorious nineteenth century of?

“No. 6. Do you believe in Fairies?

“No. 7. In ghosts?

“No. 8. In Principalities or Powers?

“No. 9. In—Heaven?

“No. 10. In—Anywhere else?

“No. 11. Did you ever see Chartres Cathedral?

“No. 12. Did you ever study—there or elsewhere—thirteenth-century glass?



CHAP. XXVIII. "No. 13. Do you ever go to the manuscript room of the British Museum ?

"No. 14. Strong outline will not go with strong colour ? But if so, do you never intend to draw with delicate outline ?

"No. 15. Will you please forgive me—and tell me—some of these things I've asked.—Ever gratefully yours, J. RUSKIN."

In her reply, Miss Greenaway disclosed the admiration which she had long cherished for Ruskin's work. The book she mentioned to himself was his favourite *Fors Clavigera*; and of this she once wrote to another friend: "Never shall I forget what I felt in reading *Fors* for the first time, and it was the first book of his I had ever read. I longed for each evening to come that I might lose myself in that new wonderful world."<sup>1</sup> So, then, the stranger whom Ruskin thought he was addressing turned out to be a devoted disciple. The teacher was quick to seize his opportunity. He began at once to amplify the hints contained in the first letter, and to pour in notes of advice upon methods of study by which she might improve her *technique*. She responded eagerly, submitted drawings for his inspection, and presently asked him to come to her studio. He and Mrs. Severn alike were delighted with her, and in the following May she went to stay with them at Brantwood. There, as her biographers say, she was "plunged into an atmosphere of thought, art, and literature, which was to her alike new and exhilarating." She became at once a dear friend of Mrs. Severn and her daughters, and the visit to Brantwood was often repeated. Ruskin, for his part, was never so pleased as in attaching a new pupil, and the pleasure was not diminished if the pupil was an affectionate woman. The correspondence shows how rapidly the friendship ripened into affection. "Dear Miss Greenaway" became "Dearest," "Darling," or "Sweetest Kate," and he was her "loving Dinie"—a signature which he explained as short for "Demonic," meaning that he was to be her artistic conscience. Such endearments are not infrequent in Ruskin's letters to other

<sup>1</sup> *Kate Greenaway*, by M. H. Spielmann and G. S. Layard, p. 223.

correspondents; and he was fond of teasing and playing. It was a standing jest, for instance, to assume that "Kate" was consumed with jealousy of "Francesca"; just as Mr. Locker-Lampson<sup>1</sup> affected jealousy of other friends of Miss Greenaway. Ruskin works the same vein when he talks of wreaking his jealousy on M. Chesneau, who had become possessed of Kate's photograph; and when she tells him of a present from one of the Princesses, he wishes he were a Prince and could send her pearls and rubies. There was a genuine affection underneath Ruskin's words, but they should not be taken too seriously. Let us "know what we're about," he wrote once, "and not think truths teasing, but enjoy each other's sympathy and admiration—and think always—how nice we are!"<sup>2</sup>

The volume of correspondence between Ruskin and Kate Greenaway is very great. Many hundreds of his notes to her, and of hers to him more than 1000 are in existence. His letters were one of Miss Greenaway's greatest pleasures. In order that they might come the more regularly, she used to furnish him with envelopes already addressed; and her disappointment was great when they did not arrive. Even we, who are now admitted into the circle, can understand something of Miss Greenaway's pleasure; for the letters to her are fragrant with much of Ruskin's charm. Also they are intimate, and reveal all his passing moods. He scolds and praises; he passes from grave to gay; fun and sadness are mingled by turns. But what strikes me no less in the letters is their good sense. Behind much good-humoured chaff, the advice which he gives is eminently sound and judicious. No one was more appreciative than Ruskin of

<sup>1</sup> See his letters of 1884 and 1885: "I daresay that Ruskin is sunning his unworthy self in your smiles." "You must let me be one of your first visitors to the new house. What will you call it? The Villa Ruskin, or Dobson Lodge, or what?" (*Kate Greenaway*, p. 91).

<sup>2</sup> Lady Dorothy Nevill says: "I have good reason to believe

that at one time the great art critic would not have been at all adverse to marry her, had she felt disposed to think favourably of such an alliance" (*The Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, edited by her son, 1906, p. 247). There was, however, no "good reason" for such a belief. It is a piece of gossip which altogether misjudged the situation.

CHAP. the genius of Miss Greenaway; and his Oxford lecture of  
XXVIII. 1884 upon her work, in which he praised it with insight and felicity, did much to confirm her vogue. But he was conscious from the first of her faults and limitations. He begged her to give to the play of her fancy a firmer foundation in study of nature, and to keep her style from degenerating into mannerism. He asked, with gentle irony, for "flowers that won't look as if their leaves had been in curl-papers all night"; for children for once without mittens; for "shoes that weren't *quite* so like mussel-shells"; for a "sun not like a drop of sealing-wax"; for girls that should be drawn with limbs, as well as frocks. He sent her written lessons in perspective; he told her what pictures to copy at the National Gallery; he ordered her to the seaside to study ankles. "Practise," he said, "from things as they are, and you will find strength and ease and new fancy and new sight coming all together." A few of his letters, selected from the ample store, will give sufficient idea of their manner:—

"BRANTWOOD, 10th July, '83. . . . All that is necessary is some consistent attention to the facts of colour and cloud form. Make slight pencil memoranda of these, the next pretty one you see. Have you a small sketch-book always in your pocket? You ought to make notes of groups of children, and of more full faces than you—face—usually."

"BRANTWOOD, Monday [March 31, 1884].—I'm so delighted about your beginning to like purple and blue flowers, though it's only for my sake. Not that I'm not proud of being able to make you like things! . . . I think flowers in *my* order of liking would come nearly like this:—Wild Rose; Alpine Rose; Alpine Gentian; White Lily; Purple Flag; Purple Convolvulus; Carnation—all the tribe; Pansy—all the tribe; Thistle—all the tribe; Daisy and Hyacinths; Snowdrop and Crocus. I only put the last so low because they've such an unfair advantage over all the rest, in coming first; and of course I've some out-of-the-way pets, like the oxalis and anagallis—but then *they* have an unfair advantage in always growing in pretty places. The Wood Anemone should go with the Daisy and the 'Blossoms,'—apple



and almond, hawthorn and cherry—have, of course, a separate CHAP.  
queendom.” XXVIII.

“BRANTWOOD, 17th March, '85.—And it is your birthday!—and my letter was no good, and I don't know how to give you any wish that you would care to come true,—but I will wish you—every birthday—some new love of lovely things, and some new forgetfulness of the teasing things, and some higher pride in the praising things, and some sweeter peace from the hurrying things, and some closer fence from the worrying things. And longer stay of time when you are happy, and lighter flight of days that are unkind.”

He amused himself with many schemes for their co-operation. He proposed to use some of her designs for stained glass for “halls in fairyland.” She seems to have asked, when and where? “The moment I'm sure of my workman,” he replied. But other “lovely plans” came next; among them, “a book on botany for you and me to do together—you to do the plates and I the text—a handbook of field botany. It will be such a rest for you and such a help for—everybody! chiefly me.” Another plan was to paint with her “some things at Brantwood like Luca and the Old Masters—and cut out those dab and dash people. I felt when I came out of the Academy as if my coat must be all splashes.” At a later date the idea was to set up a girls' drawing school in London, with Kate as chief of the “Dons, or Donnas.” Miss Greenaway was delighted at any prospect of artistic co-operation with Ruskin, and perhaps sometimes took his proposals a little too seriously. She designed a cover for “The Peace of Polissena,” one of the chapters in Miss Alexander's *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*, which, however, was not used; but this may have been due only to Ruskin's illness at the time. She offered to illustrate *Præterita* for him, and he delicately declined the suggestion; the book, he said, might not be “graceful” or “Katish” enough for her pencil. The actual instances of co-operation are slight. She drew some cats to illustrate his rhymes supplementary to *Dame Wiggins of Lee*, and he included in *Fors Clavigera* a few of her drawings. Another scheme which he had much at heart, and



CHAP. XXVIII. which he mentioned in the Oxford lecture, was to substitute hand-colouring for the colour-blocks by which her designs were reproduced. "We must get her," he had said, "to organise a school of colourists by hand, who can absolutely facsimile her own first drawing."<sup>1</sup> He trained a young student to do some work in this kind, but the examples were not issued to the public. Of Miss Greenaway's letters to Ruskin many are printed in her *Life*. The letters were often accompanied by little sketches, of which, again, several examples are given in her *Life*. Often, too, she sent him drawings; and though he bought several, he had to devise some reciprocity in giving. So he took to sending her bundles of his own sketches, nominally for her criticism, but making it a condition that she or her brother should keep for themselves one out of every ten.

### III

In July 1885 Ruskin was smitten down with a severe attack of brain-fever. This was the fourth of the series, and exactly a year afterwards came the fifth. What is the connexion between great wits and madness? I write as a layman, and do not know, and perhaps even the doctors cannot tell us much.<sup>2</sup> But I have been greatly struck, as I think any other close student of Ruskin's work must be, by one feature of his brain attacks. It is their perfectly sharp and clear definition. The point is an important one; for the question inevitably arises in any review of Ruskin's life and work, whether the mind was sound or inherently diseased. The mind was original, and therefore at each stage of its development Ruskin's views seemed insane to the vulgar. His enthusiasm for Turner, his estimate of Venetian Gothic, his political economy were all in turn called mad until they had passed into the accepted thought of the time. The

<sup>1</sup> *Art of England*, §§ 116, 117.

<sup>2</sup> Students of heredity will have noticed what has been told about

Ruskin's paternal grandfather (vol. i. p. 17); and that his father and mother were first cousins.

connected study of his work, in relation to environment and circumstances, which it has been a principal object of this Biography to facilitate, will, I think, bring the conviction that Ruskin's mental development was throughout life normal and logical. And what I seek to point out is that the history of his attacks of brain-disease does not invalidate such a conclusion. The attacks resemble nothing so much as storms. It is possible to the discerning and experienced reader to detect the coming of the storm in passages of heightened passion or excitement; the storm bursts; and then it passes away, leaving no trace behind in Ruskin's resumed work. I have instanced some cases in point in previous chapters; but the most conclusive is that of *Præterita* itself. It is of all Ruskin's books the most uniformly serene in temper. It is marked by many admirable qualities, and among others conspicuously by restraint, by perfect command over all the author's gifts<sup>1</sup>—in other words, by sanity. Yet the whole book was written during the calm between successive brain-storms. I remember hearing Professor Waldstein, in a lecture at the Royal Institution, select as the most perfect instance of Ruskin's style the description of the Rhone at Geneva which occurs in the second volume of *Præterita*. It was, he said, a masterpiece of observation, analysis, selection, and rhythm. I was curious to know when the passage was written; and chancing to meet Ruskin not long afterwards, I asked him the question. He told me (and indications in his diary confirm his recollection) that it was written in May 1886;<sup>2</sup> that is, some months after one brain-attack, and a few weeks before another.

<sup>1</sup> The exceptions are chapter xii. of vol. ii. and chapter iv. of vol. iii., both of which show in places a tendency to ramble. Each chapter was written when the author was on the very verge of a breakdown.

<sup>2</sup> He had last studied the scene in 1882. "We went out in the heat," says his companion on that

journey, "to see the Rhone. All the haze had gone, at least from the nearer view, and he seemed never tired of looking at the water from the footbridge and wherever it was visible. I wondered why he would not come on; but now I know" (W. G. Collingwood, *Ruskin Relics*, p. 60).

CHAP.  
XXVIII.

Among Ruskin's papers there is the draft of what was intended to be a Preface to the second volume of *Proserpina*, its object being to explain why he was retreating from the loftier themes of Christian art into studies of leaves and flowers. Some passages of this Preface are here printed, as giving Ruskin's own analysis of his case:—

“It is eight years since the first of my ‘Advices’ was printed on the slip inserted in the opening number of *Love’s Meinie*. At that time I had hoped, as from the first in accepting the Slade Professorship at Oxford, to make Natural History one of the chief subjects of Art practice in my school; nor should I have failed to do so, had not my discovery (I had the right to call it a ‘discovery,’ for no one till that time had ever spoken of or studied the frescoes in question) of the Botticelli and Perugino frescoes in the Sistine Chapel in the year 1872, followed by a closer examination in 1874, led me into a course of thought and historical inquiry, of the force and advance of which any reader interested in this matter may find evidence in *Fors Clavigera*.<sup>1</sup> . . . The incalculable importance to the history of Christianity of these lower frescoes of the Sistine, and the singular opportunity granted me at Assisi, also in the year 1874, of investigating the frescoes there, with the kind and sympathising permission of the remaining brothers in the Monastery, brought me back into the main elements of thought and effort which had been long before opened in the second volume of *Modern Painters* (as I have already stated in its Epilogue), and which I wish I had then followed with unbroken strength and heart, instead of retreating into the narrow purposes of the book in its original conception. In the declining and shadowy hours of after life, these higher subjects of thought are too great and too fearful for me: and in concurrence with other provocations to labour and causes of sorrow, they have now twice<sup>2</sup> thrown me into states of mental disease from which I have by little less than miracle recovered.

“But it is due not only to myself, but much more to the readers who have hitherto trusted me, or may hereafter trust, that

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<sup>1</sup> See above, Chap. XIV.

<sup>2</sup> The illnesses of 1878 and 1881.

I should state with extreme decision the difference between these modes of mental wandering, and the conditions which have permanently affected the soundness of conclusion in the thoughts of many men of the highest intellectual power. The periods of delirious imagination through which I have myself passed are simply states of prolonged dream—sometimes of actual trance, unconscious of surrounding objects; sometimes of waking fantasy, disguising or associating itself with the immediate realities both of substance and sound; but, whatever its character, recognized afterwards as a dream or vision, just as distinctly as the dreams of common sleep. There is no physical suffering in the state, nor is it otherwise depressing to the system than as leading sometimes, in particular humours of anger or sorrow, to refusal of food. On the contrary, it seems to me that the involuntary wandering of the brain is sometimes almost a rest to it, and at the worst a far less strain than any resolute rational occupation; so that I believe I did myself much more real harm by three days' steady work on the axes of crystallization in quartz, before my second illness began last February [1881], than I got during the illness itself, from three weeks of the company of uninvited phantoms and the course of imaginary events.

“The recovery from this delirious condition is, indeed, more a consequence of the rest it enforces, than of medicine; and although at first accompanied with much depression of mind (partly natural and well-founded enough, in finding that one has been in a state so disagreeable to one's friends and so humiliating to oneself), is far more rapid as regards bodily strength than it could be after a bad attack of influenza or the slightest attack of low fever; and so far as I can trace the effects of the illness on my mental powers, it leaves them only weaker in the patience of application, but neither distorts nor blunts them, so long as they can be used. I cannot now write so long as I could, nor deal with any questions involving laborious effort; but in ordinary faculties of judgment, modes of feeling, or play of what little fancy I ever had, I cannot trace more than such slackness or languor as age itself accounts for; and my friends flatter me unkindly and unjustifiably, if they perceive more failure in my work than is manifest to my own sense of it—never an extremely indulgent one. More pages have been cancelled



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XXVIII.

by me as foolish, or ill-done, in my most healthy days, than most readers would believe, judging either by the tone or the number of the rest."

Ruskin's recollection, when a brain-storm passed, of many of the incidents of the tempest, was very vivid, and after his death one of the medical journals published an account of them given in his own words by a friend.<sup>1</sup> It describes with characteristic vividness the nightmares of the disordered brain, and adds that "while all ugly things assumed fearfully and horribly hideous forms, all beautiful objects appeared ten times more lovely." His Turner drawings, on the bedroom wall, looked in their added splendour "more like pictures of Heaven than of earth." To like effect with this last observation, I remember Ruskin saying to me that the visions in his illness were mostly of Inferno; "but sometimes visions of Paradise, and one was almost recompensed."

Whatever may be the true account of these attacks of delirium, the pathos of their recurrence is terribly poignant. A series of extracts has been published<sup>2</sup> from letters which Ruskin wrote during the years of *Præterita* to his friendly printer, Mr. Jowett, at Aylesbury. No comment is necessary upon the tragedy which may be read between the lines:—

"I'm going crazy with the hares again."

"May I know what the illness has been; perhaps it may give me some courage to bear nine weeks of this helplessness myself; if only it will then pass away."

"I am getting slowly better, but must never put so many irons in the fire that will all *stir* it, any more."

"I am . . . quaking about earth in general, and don't feel as if it was any good to describe mountains more."

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<sup>1</sup> This curious piece is in the *British Medical Journal*, Jan. 27, 1900. In *Fiction, Fair and Foul* (§ 14 *n.*), Ruskin recalled a dream in which he "fell through the

earth and came out on the other side."

<sup>2</sup> In R. E. Pengelly's *John Ruskin: a Biographical Sketch*.

“The spring, which I look forward to more than all the rest of the year, makes me, when it comes, more sad than autumn.”

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“I am so very glad about your finding that the last [chapter of *Præterita* <sup>1</sup>] is liked—having an uneasy feeling now, about whatever I write, that people will suspect apoplexy in it. I know the thoughts are as they used to be, but the power of expression may partly fail me, and become too eccentric, because I have no time or energy to correct in quietness. . . . And as, whenever I say anything they don’t like, they all immediately declare I must be out of my mind, the game has to be played neatly.”

#### IV

It was at Professor Norton’s suggestion that Ruskin resolved to continue the autobiographical reminiscences, commenced incidentally in *Fors Clavigera*, and to make them into a separate book. The book, as we have it, is not carried so far as Ruskin had hoped and designed; but even in its design, it was never intended to be a complete and systematic account of the author’s life. The full title explains the more modest scheme with which he took up the task. It was to give, of the Past, “Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts perhaps worthy of Memory.” Ruskin had found already in writing *Fors* that such scenes “returned soothingly to his memory,” <sup>2</sup> and he now set himself each day to write down a piece of his Past. The first draft of much of the book appears in his diaries of 1885, the reminiscences being jotted down as they occurred to him. Next, he copied out these jottings, making many additions; and, at a third stage, he rearranged the material into its final form. Among his manuscripts are many passages which he could not conveniently fit in, or which were held over for use in the intended continuation of *Præterita* or in its companion-volume *Dilecta*. This is the source of the “Autobiographical Notes” given occasionally in the present Biography.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. x. of vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 88.

CHAP. Letters to various friends shows the pleasure and interest  
XXVIII. which Ruskin took in the work :—

(To R. C. LESLIE, *June 1, 1886.*)—"I am turning the first of midsummer days to good account by sending to printer your memories of Turner, and notes on *Téméraire*, to be the first number of a new serial of mine—(purer piracy never was done in New York !) to be called (I believe), for I've only thought of the name this morning, *Manentia*.<sup>1</sup> It is to be a supplement to *Præterita*, giving friends' letters, and collateral pieces of events or debate for which there is no room in the closely packed story, or which would make me jealous of their branching and often livelier interest. I shall be able thus to give pieces for reference out of diaries, and sometimes a bit of immediate Fors-fashion talk—which will be a relief from the please-your-worship and by-your-leave style of *Præterita*."

(To KATE GREENAWAY, *June 13, 1886.*)—"I cannot say how thankful I am that you continue to like *Præterita* so much. . . . I fancy this vividness of description which you feel is merely caused by my analytic power of fastening on the points that separate that scene, whatever it be, from others ; of course this is not unconscious nor without effort, and I have now a good command of English words also. But this vividness must be made also in the reader's mind, and I don't believe anybody but you and I know what an aspen is like. I didn't 'smile' in that sense—at your saying this book would live. I do hope it will go to its mark better than the rest. But the difficult bits are all to come !"

These extracts refer, as will have been seen, to the issue of successive chapters of *Præterita*, and to the supplementary series called *Dilecta*, which was to contain "Correspondence, Diary Notes, and Extracts from Books illustrating *Præterita*." Of the third volume of *Præterita*, only four of the intended twelve chapters were written ; and of *Dilecta* (which was to have consisted of thirty-six chapters) only three. Ruskin showed me, in April 1888, a list of pretty titles for the twelve intended chapters of the third volume of *Præterita*

<sup>1</sup> Ultimately called *Dilecta*.

and for as many parallel chapters of a third volume of *Dilecta* :—

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## PRÆTERITA.—VOL. III.

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1. The Grande Chartreuse.
2. Mont Velan.
3. L'Esterelle.
4. Joanna's Care.
5. The Source of the Arveron.
6. Königstein.
7. The Rainbows of Giessbach.
8. Regina Montium.
9. The Hunter's Rock.
10. Fairies' Hollow.
11. Shakespeare's Cliff.
12. Calais Pier.

## DILECTA.—VOL. III.

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1. Golden Water.
2. Dash, Thistle, and Maude.<sup>1</sup>
3. Ara Coeli.
4. Brave Galloway.
5. Rose Fluor.
6. Verona.
7. The Jungfrau.
8. The Bay of Uri.
9. St. Martin's Porch.
10. St. Martin's Bridge.
11. St. Martin's Chapel.
12. Notre Dame of the Isle.

"Everything is written," he said, with a smile, "except the chapters themselves." "But what," I asked, "about the intervening chapters iii.-xxiv. of *Dilecta*?" "Ah," he replied, "I don't suppose I shall ever do those; but any kind friend or editor can do them for me when I am dead; the material is all at Brantwood."

As it stands, then, the book is a fragment; yet, so far as it extends, it has an artistic completeness. One may wish for more of it, but not that any of it were written otherwise than it is. *Præterita*, says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "is certainly the most charming thing that he ever gave to the world, and is one of the most pathetic and exquisite *Confessions* in the language." It is, for one thing, a model of perfectly limpid English. The graceful ease and humour of his later style are nowhere better shown. It is also, I think, a model of literary tact. In some ways this last book by Ruskin was a revelation. What surprised many readers was the insight displayed into human character and his happy skill in portraiture. "Ruskin," wrote Miss Thackeray (Lady Ritchie), "should have been a novelist. It is true he says he never knew a child more incapable than himself of telling a tale, but when he chooses to describe a man or a

<sup>1</sup> The names of successive reigning favourites among his dogs.

<sup>2</sup> *John Ruskin* ("English Men of Letters" Series), p. 197.



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woman, there stands the figure before us; when he tells a story, we live it. . . . How delightfully he remembers! . . . We get glimpses of the neighbours, and we seem to know them as we know the people out of *Vanity Fair* or out of Miss Austen's novels. . . . It is English middle-class life for the most part, described with something of George Eliot's racy reality."<sup>1</sup> Leslie Stephen, a prince of biographers, pronounced *Præterita* to be "one of the most charming examples of the most charming kind of literature. No autobiographer surpasses him in freshness and fulness of memory, nor in the power of giving interest to the apparently commonplace. There is an even remarkable absence of striking incident, but somehow or other the story fascinates."<sup>2</sup> The freshness and fulness of memory is one of the secrets of the charm of *Præterita*; the zest which the author imparts to scenes and incidents is another. "I am just finishing the second volume of *Præterita*," wrote Manning (April 17, 1887), "with great increase of interest, for I was in Rome with George Richmond in the year or the year before you were there, and your places and pictures in Italy are all known to me. But I am looking forward to your times at Assisi with S. Francis, and elsewhere with B. Angelico; that is, in the world of *Christ's Folk*—very beautiful folk, and very unlike the folk now growing up under the influence of the three black R's—Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution." To other readers *Præterita* was a revelation, not so much of Ruskin's gifts, as of the early limitations and struggles against which they had to contend, and of the romance which saddened his later years. The utter sincerity of the book, the frankness of its revelations, is another of its charms; and that may well have come easily to an author who was little given to concealment, and who now, in his old age, had no reason for illusionment or disguise. What may cause surprise, knowing as we do the circumstances in which the book was written, is its serenity of temper and vivacity of tone. "I do not mean this book," said Ruskin, "to be in any avoidable way

<sup>1</sup> *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning*, 1892, pp. 92-97.

<sup>2</sup> "John Ruskin," in the *National Review*, April 1900, p. 255.

disagreeable or querulous." He also succeeded for the most part in keeping it free from that desultoriness which too often marked his later books. The tone in which *Præterita* is written is as if he had resolved to atone for past petulance by sustained gentleness. He had been tried by suffering; and the latest of his books is perhaps of all of them the most eloquent of the essential sweetness of his nature. "The game has to be played neatly." And neatly it was played to the end. But the effect of the successive brain-storms was cumulative, and Ruskin had at last to bow before them. The brain had been sound, and after several of the attacks, its recovery had been complete in function if not in strength. But in the end the functions succumbed to gradual decay. When the last chapter of *Præterita* was written, Ruskin's work, and in the true sense his life, were ended. But this was not until 1889, and the story of his last years of active life must be resumed in another chapter.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### OLD AGE AND LAST WORKS

(1886-1889)

“Though the fountain cease to play  
Dew must glitter on the brink;  
Though the weary mind decay,  
As of old it thought so must it think.”—W. CORY.

#### I

RUSKIN'S attack of brain-fever in July 1885 was severe; recovery was only gradual; and the anxiety of his friends had been great. A Complimentary Address, presented to him at Christmas 1885, gave him pleasure, and he was still able to rally after defeats. “Well and cheerful,” he wrote in his diary (Jan. 1886), “and doing most useful work.” “Yesterday,” he says a little later (April 26), “most successful work; quiet day in the woods. . . . Got up thinking what marvellous powers and influences I have now, if I use them honestly and bravely”; and again on the next day: “An entirely blessed and pure morning. All kinds of helpful thought sent with the beauty, *D.G.*” But in July he was again laid prostrate. Yet again he recovered vigour and good spirits. His limbs still bore him on many a mountain ramble:—

(*To C. E. NORTON.*) “BRANTWOOD, 13th Sept., '86.—DARLING CHARLES,—I like the notion of leaving you out of my Autobiography. What would be the use of it, if it did not show under what friendly discouragements I wrote my best works? You might as well propose I should leave out Carlyle, or Joan herself! I have been steadily gaining since last report, and on Friday was half-way up the Old Man, without more fatigue than deepened the night's rest, and greatly pleased that, the day being exceptionally clear, I saw Ingleborough without any feeling of diminished faculty

of sight. And the last illness did indeed leave lessons as to the danger of mere active excitement of brain, which none of the four previous ones did. For all those, there was some reason in the particular trains of feeling that ended in them; but this last came of a quite dispassionate review of the opinions of the Committee of Council on Education, and analysis of the legal position of the Vicar of Coniston under the will of Lady le Fleming. It has only struck me lately that I was meant for a lawyer, and that the æsthetic side, or point, of me ought to have remained undeveloped, like the eyes which the Darwinians are discovering in the backs, or behinds, of lizards."

An entry in his diary, some months later, shows him busy, as ever, with multifarious tasks—"mineral ticketing," letters to a young artist "promising support in bird drawing," "*Præterita* in full speed," and so forth. Such entries are typical of bright and busy months which were not infrequent during these years, and which are reflected in the happy mood of *Præterita*.

And in this evening of his days Ruskin had also that which should accompany old age, in honour, love, and friendship. In his periods of good health he was able to entertain many guests. Froude, for one, came on a visit in the autumn of 1886. I have seen a letter from him in which he says "how wholesome, how useful, how in every way precious were the days then spent at Brantwood; partaking in a simple and beautiful life, and breathing pure air, spiritual as well as material." They had much talk about Carlyle, for the storm which Froude's *Life* and subsidiary publications had caused was then raging. Ruskin was in the difficult position of being the attached friend both of Froude and of his antagonist in this matter, Professor Norton. His sympathies were wholly with Froude, whose picture of Carlyle was, he held, in the main true, and therefore what the subject of it would have desired. In some respects, however, he thought there was still something more to be said, and he proposed to write on the subject himself—partly to vindicate, and partly to supplement, Froude. "You are the only person," Froude had written,



CHAP. XXIX. "to whom I can talk about Carlyle, or from whom I could either seek advice or expect it." And at a later time he said: "Your assurance that on the whole the selection which I made from Carlyle's letters is a good one, has given me more pleasure than anything which I have yet heard on that subject. . . . I cannot tell you how I feel your own willingness to clear the sky for me in my own lifetime." And, again, "Your proposal to bring out a small volume on Carlyle simply delights me." This was in 1889, and Ruskin's working days were then at an end. The little volume was never to be written, and the personal mention of Carlyle in *Præterita* is only incidental. Another friend from whom a visit is recorded in Ruskin's diary is Aubrey de Vere. Mr. and Mrs. La Touche came also. The griefs and misunderstandings of the past had been softened, the memories of happy days remained; and Mrs. La Touche's loving knowledge of birds, beasts, and flowers gave to Ruskin additional pleasure in her visits and letters. A new friend of his later years was Mr. R. C. Leslie, elder brother of the Academician. In love of the sea and of animals there was a strong link of sympathy between them; and Mr. Leslie liked to send him jottings, cuttings, or gossip about things lovely and of good report. Some of the letters and anecdotes are embodied in Ruskin's books. Letters from William Gifford Palgrave, then Her Majesty's Minister in Uruguay, also gave Ruskin much pleasure during these years. Palgrave was very much at one with Ruskin in his outlook upon the world, and from 1884 to his death in 1888 was one of the most regular and affectionate of Ruskin's correspondents. Some of his dearest friends had by this time passed away. Among them was the "best" and "truest" of them all—Dr. John Brown—"best friend, because he was of my father's race and native town; truest because he knew always how to help us both, and never made any mistake in doing so." In later years Brown was constant in encouragement and appreciation of Ruskin's work. "You are among my more precious frankincense friends," Ruskin wrote. The friends both knew what it was, while still in the flesh, to pass through the valley of the shadow, and their later letters are

touched with a yet deeper note of affection. "Let us both look," said Ruskin to the author of *Rab*, "for the happy hunting-ground, where we shall meet all our—dogs again." And again: "I trust that we shall both go on yet, in spite of sorrow, speaking to each other through the sweetbriar and the vine, for many an hour of twilight as well as morning." But in 1882 Dr. John Brown passed away. "Nothing could tell," wrote Ruskin, "the loss to me in his death, nor the grief to how many greater souls than mine, that had been possessed in patience through his love."<sup>1</sup> Rawdon Brown had died in the following year, and Prince Leopold had written to condole with Ruskin on the loss of their common friend:—

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"FARNLEY HALL, Oct. 12, 1883.—MY DEAR MR. RUSKIN,—When we met at Oxford, you asked me to write to you. I have not forgotten, but I have had nothing to tell you that would interest. Now that I find myself in this *beautiful* old house, and living in a room formerly inhabited by *Turner*, with a picture of yourself opposite to me, I feel that it will please you to hear from me. . . . I *must* refer in this letter to a great and mutual loss which we have both sustained not long since, in the death of dear Rawdon Brown. *Literally*, a 'Stone of Venice' gone! When he and I parted five and a half years ago on the steps of the Ca' Gussoni, he cried and said we should never meet again, and I, with the decided intention of returning very soon to my dear Venice, said 'Nonsense,' and joked with him; and now his words have come true—I have never been able to return since then. I thought much of you on hearing the sad news, which I did long after the event had happened, as I was far away in Germany at the time. I look upon it as one of the good fortunes of my life that I met and knew that noble character. What will poor Toni do? . . . Next week I shall be at home again at Claremont. When will you visit *us* there? and see our child? You know you will be always welcome, and will find us quite alone there, whenever you *choose* to come.—Yours affectionately, LEOPOLD. The Duchess sends you her kindest regards."

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<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 232.

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In 1884 the Prince himself passed away, and Ruskin had paid a visit of condolence to the Duchess at Claremont. The epitaph on the memorial which she placed in the church at Esher was written by Ruskin. To old friends, who still remained, and to new, whom Ruskin was still encouraging by his counsel, he continued during these years to write:—

(To FRANK SHORT.) “*10th February, 1886.*—MY DEAR FRIEND, —Now for goodness’ sake take care of your eyes, and your lungs, and your stomach, and we will have such lovely times. I never read anything with such delight as all you tell me; and, of course, the first proof of Chartreuse—and much more the sketch—must be better by worlds than the spotty last phase, and we’ll have native copper dug for us on Lake Superior—and we’ll do the great St. Gothards and Tivoli and Courmayeur, and I hope to live to be eighty, and feel I haven’t lived in vain—if you keep well and happy at it. Can’t write more to-day, but will the moment the proofs come.”

(To FREDERICK HARRIS.)<sup>1</sup> “*Feb. 17, ’86.*—I am glad you like to please me, and I *am* interested in you, but whatever any of my pupils do only *does* please me so far as it advances themselves, or helps me in helping others. I think you may become a most vital centre of teaching in connexion with mine. But it is not in the least to please myself that I ask you to write well. The habit of fine curve and straight line, and orderly doing, is of the greatest use to you as an artist. Never write an unnecessary word, and always write it carefully and prettily.”

(To GEORGE RICHMOND.) “BRANTWOOD, *27th March, 1887.*—DEAREST GEORGE,—I am very thankful to be yet in this—not bad, after all—world—with you to count birthdays in it yet with me. We cannot choose but be old! But, if we could, would we? How nice it is to feel wiser than everybody else—to feel that we ought always to have all our own way—to have no scruples whatever about taking it when we can get it—to be able to kiss anybody whenever we like—to recollect the lots of nice and clever things we’ve done—to see our names every other day in the papers, and

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<sup>1</sup> This is one letter from a long series addressed to a drawing-master who had sought Ruskin’s advice.

feel that so far the Press is really a great Institution. I meant this, when I began, to be a pathetic love-letter, but it has become, on reflection, a merry one. I'm going to make up my quarrel with Julia, in honour of the day, and say it was all her Father's fault that she doesn't appreciate Turner! I do hope to have some nice bits in *Præterita* about the way you and I used to quarrel. Do you recollect jumping off the seat opposite somebody's Claude? Do let us both take care of ourselves and enjoy ourselves, till our beards be grown.—Ever your lovingest."

(To LADY MOUNT-TEMPLE.) "BRANTWOOD, 23rd July, '87.—SWEETEST ISOLA,—Is there no Isola indeed where we can find refuge and give it? I have never yet been so hopeless of doing anything more in this wide-wasting and wasted earth unless we seize and fortify with love—a new Atlantis."

## II

Some of Ruskin's most charming letters, at this period as indeed throughout his life, were addressed to children and young girls. He was the teacher, with child-friends as with others; but whenever children had affairs of their own in progress, he was careful to treat them gravely and on terms of equality. This is one of the keys to the hearts of children, and they opened gladly at Ruskin's touch. An entry in his diary for January 1885 records the receipt of an "Altogether delicious letter from little girl announcing founding of society for kindness to animals." This was "The Friends of Living Creatures," founded by Miss Katie Macdonald, *æt.* 10, and some other children at Bedford Park, with a full complement of Rules, Badges, Knights, Secretary, a Journal, Editor and Art-Editor.<sup>1</sup> Katie's mother was a reader of Ruskin, and it was his denunciations of the wanton destruction of beautiful and harmless creatures that prompted the foundation of the Society. At the first meeting it was

<sup>1</sup> The story of "The Friends of Living Creatures and John Ruskin" is told in two very prettily written articles, by Mrs. Katie Macdonald Goring (the Katie of the letters), in the *Fortnightly Review*, September and October 1907.



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resolved that Katie should write asking him to accept the office of Patron. He sent sketches, gave them advice about the Journal, and delivered judgment on knotty points submitted to him. On coming up to London presently, he offered to meet the Society and deliver a little Address. Katie's mother has given recollections of the discussion which followed the Address. A boy, greatly daring, wanted to know if, supposing certain donkey-boys insisted on kicking their donkeys, the rules of the Society would permit its "Knights" to give them "a jolly good thrashing." Ruskin rose with admirable gravity and said:—

"The speaker has presented me with a serious problem. I really hardly know what to say. Of course, we are largely dependent on the good offices of our 'knights' in the society. They have quite special duties to perform which cannot be entrusted to the younger boy members, and which, of course, must not be allowed to trouble the girls. Now, whether or no the particular methods advocated by the speaker can be justly considered as compatible with, or included in, the exact performance of a knight's duties, I find extremely hard to decide. Well, I am inclined to think," continued Ruskin, "at the risk of incurring the displeasure of all the mamas now present"—this with a look and deprecatory smile around the room—"I am inclined to think that, if *all other* means have been tried, and have failed, that if patient explanation, persuasion, reason, and warnings have alike been unsuccessful in inducing the donkey-boys to treat their animals with consideration and fairness—I think, yes, I really do, that our knights are only fulfilling the obligations we have laid upon them, in shaming the donkey-boys into right conduct, by giving them (I accept the speaker's terms) a thoroughly good, sound thrashing."

After the meeting, members and their mamas were introduced to Ruskin. "He insisted upon having the knight brought to him, to confer with him further on the proper treatment of donkey-boys. A girl of ten, with long brown curls and shining eyes, the Beauty of Bedford Park, delighted him with her sweet, gay smile and manners—'Diamond Eyes,' he called her, then, and never forgot her. A child of

five, our youngest member, lured him, as the room grew emptier, with a game of 'Touch last,' and kept him pursuing her for ten minutes and more, in and out among the disordered benches, her peals of baby laughter echoing through the place." Is it not a pretty scene? Many letters followed; full of graceful play, and tender thoughts; revealing his love alike for children and for animals. "You know, my dear," he says in one letter, "little girls are not much better than kittens or butterflies, and boys, seldom quite as good as ponies or dogs." His illnesses interrupted communications between the Society and its Patron; but the members might "at least remember with gladness throughout their life how kind they were to their old and sick friend." Some of his latest letters are still to "Katie," who bids farewell, in graceful words, to the "pure and generous spirit, whose gentle radiance, shed for a while upon the garden of our childhood, lies there luminous amongst the flowers; shining again into our faces as we breathe, in haunted, lovely moments, the fragrance of old days." Ruskin's love for children was as sunlight upon lilies.<sup>1</sup>

His greatest pleasure, perhaps, was in pleasing young people. Many reminiscences of Brantwood relate to these years, when he liked to have young men and girls around him, and lent himself out to give them instruction and pleasure. One of his girl-friends, afterwards Mrs. Allen Harker, has given a characteristic description of tea-time at Brantwood:—

"He looked an old man even then in 1888, as he stood in his favourite place on the hearth-rug in the Brantwood drawing-room; but his eyes were the youngest I have ever seen in adult face, blue and clear like a child's, with the child's large direct gaze. By tea-time, every table, chair, and most of the floor would be littered with a wonderful profusion of sketches, photographs, missals, Greek coins, and uncut gems. 'Now we begin to look comfortable,' he would say gleefully when there was nothing left to sit upon, and we had to pick our steps among the treasures scattered at our feet; and we *were* comfortable. He spared neither himself

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wyndham's pretty phrase, in *Letters to M. G.*, p. ix.

CHAP. nor his possessions to give pleasure to his guests. He talked much  
XXIX. and brilliantly, laughing heartily an infectious, chuckling laugh  
when anything amused him.”<sup>1</sup>

The story is told of the poet-painter, William Blake, that in his old age a child came to see him. He put his hand upon her head and blessed her, saying, “May God make the world as beautiful to you, my child, as it has been to me.” No small part of Ruskin’s life was spent in similar benediction.

Another occupation which gave Ruskin interest and enjoyment during these years was teaching the village children at Coniston. The same visitor who has just been quoted has described the scene:—

“Every Saturday a dozen or so of sturdy mountain lasses, ranging from ten to fourteen, came for a ‘lesson’ and for tea. These lessons were encyclopædic in their scope, ranging from the varying shapes of fir-cones to the correct position on the map of ‘Riblah in the land of Hamath,’ probably followed by a disquisition on ‘the god Bel or Baal’ as represented ‘on the cast of a coin—Italian—Greek—finest time.’ Sometimes he would read Shakespeare to them; but whatever else was included, the Bible and some botany formed part of the lesson. After the lesson they had tea in his study, laying it themselves with much laughter and clatter. He cleared the tables for them himself, giving up the room to them entirely for that afternoon, ‘because the parlourmaid’—not unnaturally—‘objected to the crumbs in the dining-room before dinner.’ Among the many other subjects, he taught them songs, such as the following, both words and quaint, lilting tune being his own:

‘Ho, ho, the cocks crow!

Little girls—get up:

Little girls to bed must go

When the robins sup.

Heigh, heigh, the nags neigh!

Up, boys, and afield,

Ere the sun through yonder grey

Raise his russet shield.’

Whether the girls understood much of the lessons, I do not know; but they were not in the least afraid of him, and Jane Anne seemed to regard him with something of a maternal indulgence. ‘He’s a foony man is Meester Rooskin,’ she would observe after a

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<sup>1</sup> “John Ruskin in the ‘Eighties,” *Outlook*, February 11, 1899.

lesson, 'boot he likes oos to tek a good tea'; and this covered a multitude of eccentric enthusiasms."

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As an example of Ruskin's letters to little girls, the following may be given:—

"BRANTWOOD, *Thursday (some day or other of 1883)*.—DARLING RIELLE,—Yes, I *was* dreadfully crushed by that portentous silence,—because, you know, though May is so irresistible, and Alice is so bewitching, yet *you* were my first Love,—and then—they don't know anything about Ireland—do they now, darlint? So you really mustn't exile me like that from Erin any more. I wonder what you'll answer to my telegram;—I shall be thinking of nothing else all day—if I may come.—Ever your loving J. R. P.S.—Don't frizz the hair quite so high, this time."

He wrote in similar terms of endearment to elder girls as well, and the good sense of his letters to them is often as conspicuous as their graceful playfulness and chivalrous affection:—

(To MISS MARION WATSON.) "1887.—My advice to you, dear girlie, is to do for the present without any further hesitation what your father wishes, and to cure yourself as fast as you can of habits of inattention which, you know—you do know in your little heart—are in great part wilful. It does not in the least matter whether you pass the Oxford Examination, but it does matter that you should get good marks from your own conscience, and your father's sense of your willing obedience. Where would be the virtue of obedience if we were only told to do what we liked? I will not disturb you any more with the book of Daniel, but write my lecture on it at home; and when you are allowed to come back to Brantwood you must read it with the strictest attention! Meantime, I am ready to help you in everything that puzzles you; will look out the dreadfulest words for you in my big dictionaries, and—if that will give you any pleasure—begin learning German with you myself."

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that every girl to whom Ruskin became a "most affectionate" or even "loving" correspondent was in fact a personal friend. He



CHAP. was always free with terms of endearment, even to his  
XXIX. men-friends; and "Darling Downs" was an occasional form of address to his old gardener. Some of his books, and one of the most widely read of them—*Sesame and Lilies*—in particular, make special appeal to girls, and he thus had innumerable admirers among them. Except sometimes in moods of irritation, his good-nature in answering those who asked his advice was unfailing; and many girls, with the merest loophole of reason or excuse, would enter into correspondence with him. If there was anything in their letters which at all took his fancy, or if he saw any likelihood of exercising an influence for good, he on his side would, with pleasant flattery, become their "most affectionate" friend; in many cases without ever seeing his correspondents at all. A large number of such letters to unknown or little-known girl-friends has passed through my hands, and a still larger number doubtless exists. They testify to his approachableness and his good-nature. He was hardly less ready to respond to young men who sought, or seemed to seek, his counsel with a genuine desire for moral or intellectual aid. He was, indeed, impatient of idle inquirers, but the trouble which he would take with other correspondents was unbounded, and to appeals for material, no less than moral, aid he was always open. Even at the close of his working days, when he was weak and much depressed, he still found time and will to send notes of advice and encouragement, as well as presents of books, to unknown girl-friends. One of his latest letters is of such a kind:—

(*To a young girl.*) "BRANTWOOD, July 16, 1889.—I am very grateful for your sweet letter, and glad that you care whether I am ill or well. Perhaps I make occasional illness too frequent an excuse for constant idleness, and so these reports get about. There is no mischief in them—if my friends do not allow themselves to be made more anxious by them than they have perhaps too good reason to be in my own sadness at getting old. But there are one or two more pictures of little girls yet to be drawn, I hope, before I forget them—if ever I do! You will not care for the *Stones of*

*Venice*, but when you are a little older *Eagle's Nest* is one of the books I have written most carefully for girls. I send you by this post a little account of Amiens Cathedral, which may perhaps tell you of some things you may like to compare with your own."

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### III

It is a picture of active, benevolent, and happy old age which has thus far been drawn; but these same years were broken by serious attacks of illness, which came with greater frequency, and ultimately brought his active life to an end. Perhaps if he could have abstained from exciting occupations, the danger might have been averted. But, now as in former years, he knew the danger better than he succeeded in averting it. "Require greatest caution," he noted (March 25, 1886), "from usual press of coincident thoughts"; and again (April 8), "Politics so fearful now in the papers that I'm like a dog in a chain—like the dog in the wood-yard that can't get at Mr. Quilp." But often he slipped his chain, and was in the thick of the fight. The fifth attack of delirious fever, that in the summer of 1886, was severe. He went for a short time after his latter attack to Heysham, on the Lancashire coast; but the spring of 1887 brought news of the death of Laurence Hilliard, of pleurisy, on a friend's yacht in the *Ægean*. Ruskin loved him dearly, and the loss deepened a mood of depression, which passed into one of anger and suspicion. "To be wroth with one we love Doth work like madness in the brain." It was a distressing feature of some of Ruskin's illnesses that Coleridge's lines were reversed: the madness in the brain made him wroth with those he loved. There are letters written at such times which should be destroyed, and there were incidents which need not be recalled.

On partially recovering from the illness of 1887, Ruskin resolved to leave Brantwood. He posted south with Mr. Arthur Severn; and then settled alone, at Folkestone, and afterwards at Sandgate, with occasional visits to London, until the spring of 1888. Throughout this period Ruskin

CHAP. was with some quiet intervals in a very excitable state. He  
XXIX. was oppressed with religious despondency. He was not always free from delusions. His conduct was sometimes eccentric. He had wandering thoughts and vagrant fancies. At other times, and on some subjects, he was quietly happy, and his pen recovered its old cunning. Many of his letters from Folkestone and Sandgate tell of his joy in the sea and in the skies. He found much pleasure, too, in music, and engaged an organist, Mr. Roberts, to play to him. Mr. Roberts, with whom Ruskin speedily became on affectionate terms, used to visit him frequently in connexion with theories he was endeavouring to work out in relation to the association of form, sound, and colour; but after a while this was dropped, and Ruskin was content to listen while the favourite operas of his youth were played to him. He reverted to his fondness for boating, and had several very beautiful models built and rigged by Charles Dalby, of Folkestone, a past-master in the mystery. These models—the old Dover packet, old-style cutter, yawl, and so forth—are still at Brantwood.<sup>1</sup>

In the early spring of 1888 Ruskin paid some flying visits to London; visiting the galleries and museums, and seeing some of his friends. Alarming reports of his condition had found their way into the newspapers from Sandgate, and he was anxious to give tangible disproof of them. "I had great joy," he wrote to a friend from Morley's Hotel in April, "and sense of being in my right place to-day in the Turner room, and am going to stay in London till people have been taught that they can't make my skin into gloves yet." And to the same friend a day or two later (April 22):—

"I went to the private view of the Old Water-Colour yesterday, and there *were* people there glad to see me, Robert Browning among others. And I've been to the British Museum, and am staying very contentedly within reach of it and some other places. And I'm not going to the theatres, and altogether I'm as good just now as I know how to be."

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<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin Relics*, p. 26.

Similarly to Mrs. Severn he wrote (April 26):—

“I’ve had such a day. Only to think of the state I was in when you began to pick me up last year, and of what I can do now! I had a lovely time with Arfie<sup>1</sup> at the Institute—two hours, looking at every picture, and I thought Arfie’s much more tender and refined than ever before, and that most of the artists were doing their very best. Then Arfie took me to the panorama of Niagara, which astonished and delighted me. Then I took Arfie to British Museum, and showed him the diamond, ruby, and my case of agates, and had a nice talk with Fletcher. Then we looked at all the birds’ nests. Then I set Arfie down at Kensington station and went on to Miss Ingelow’s, who *was* glad to see me, and we had a lovely long tea talk and agreed about everything, and she said so many pretty things of my Joanie, and a great many of me, and I came away greatly cheered and helped, and resolved to write to her now with some consistency.”

Ruskin’s occasional visits to London during these years were a great pleasure to his friends. “I hope you will be coming to London,” wrote Cardinal Manning (April 17, 1887), “for I should like to begin again at our last semicolon in the carriage by South Kensington.” “Those two hours which I spent with you in the South Kensington Museum,” said Froude, “are as fresh in my memory as a poem. You might give me another two hours there; or there is Owen’s wonderful gallery of bones, and minerals. The bones he has himself explained to me, and *you* could make the stones into a palace of crystals.” But sometimes his talks or his letters were of farewell. He had to cease his commissions to “St. George’s” artists. “It has been a dreadful time with me,” he wrote to one of them (Mr. Rooke), “since I ceased to write to you” (Apr. 25, 1888).

#### IV

The amount of literary work which Ruskin was able to do during these broken years was considerable. He had

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Arthur Severn.



CHAP. to discontinue the series of reprints, with revisions, of  
XXIX. chapters in *Modern Painters* dealing with mountains and clouds—*In Montibus Sanctis and Cœli Enarrant* (1885); but at intervals during 1886-7-8-9 he wrote a large part of *Præterita*; a Part of *Proserpina* (1886); some notes on the Millais Exhibition<sup>1</sup> (1886); a pleasant paper of recollection of *Arthur Burgess* (1887); the preface to *Hortus Inclusus* (1887); a paper on engraving called *The Black Arts* (1887); the preface to a new edition of his *Oxford Lectures on Art* (1888); and a preface to my own *Handbook to the National Gallery* (1888). No one would guess from the serene tone and literary skill of this last piece that it was written during intervals of a period of mental excitement.

Besides these occasional pieces, and a Report and Catalogue for St. George's Guild, Ruskin edited, with many notes and essays, a series of books which may be grouped together as *Studies in Peasant Life*. This series comprises (1) *The Story of Ida*, by Miss Francesca Alexander, edited, with a Preface, by Ruskin (1883); (2) *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*, written and illustrated by Miss Alexander, and edited, with various notes, essays, and a Preface, by Ruskin (1885); (3) *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*, again by Miss Alexander, and edited in the same way by Ruskin (1887, 1889); and (4) Gotthelf's *Ulric the Farm Servant*, translated by Mrs. Julia Firth, and edited, again with notes and a Preface, by Ruskin (1886-1888). Though these studies belong to the latest years of Ruskin's literary activity, they are connected in subject and scope with *Fors Clavigera* and *Bibliotheca Pastorum*. "Farm after farm I can show you," said Ruskin in *Fors*, "in Bavaria, Switzerland, the Tyrol, and such other places, where men and women are perfectly happy and good without any iron servants."<sup>2</sup> In these studies, describing peasant life in the hill country of Italy and in the Swiss lowlands, the examples, thus promised, are given. The connexion in Ruskin's mind between Miss Alexander's songs and stories of Tuscan and Venetian peasants, on the one hand, and the Swiss tales of

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 401.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 5.

Gotthelf, on the other, is indicated in his Preface to *Ulric*, where he says that "having been enabled to lay before the English reader, in Miss Alexander's *Songs of Tuscany*, the truth of Italian peasant character animated by sincere Catholic religion," he found it his "next most instant duty to place in parallel light the more calculating and prosperous virtue of Protestant Switzerland." The series is thus a collection of the simple annals and sincere faith of those peasant-races in whose "voiceless religion and uncomplaining duty" is to be found, as we are told in *Fors*,<sup>1</sup> "that Church on earth, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail." When Ruskin was told of "histories of civilization," "Write first," he said, "the history of your native village."<sup>2</sup> In Miss Alexander's studies of her village friends, in the hill-country of Tuscany and the Veneto, and in the no less faithful fiction of Gotthelf, Ruskin found "some part of what is exactly true in the greatest of the sciences, that of Humanity," and thus real contributions to "domestic history"—the history of the "innocent and invincible peasant life," which tells of the two powers, often ignored, by writers of "loftier pretence"—the providence of Heaven and the virtue of men. By such history—showing "under all sorrow, the force of virtue; over all ruin, the restoring charity of God"—we may best "understand the past, and predict the future."<sup>3</sup>

Miss Alexander's studies of peasant-life appealed strongly to Ruskin. The simple faith of "Christ's Folk," the openness of their souls to the appeals of religious art; the living examples which they give of the dignity of labour, of the happiness of work well done, of faithfulness in service: these things made Miss Alexander's record contain for him, as he wrote, "all he wanted to say about Italian peasantry." Her pen-and-ink drawings contained, if not all that he wanted to say about modern art and its possibilities, yet many admirable qualities which he prized highly. He was conscious of her limitations, and her figures, especially of

<sup>1</sup> Letter 84.<sup>3</sup> Preface to *The Story of Ida*;<sup>2</sup> Lectures on the *Discourses of* and *Bible of Amiens*, ch. i. § 19, Reynolds (Lib. Ed., vol. xxii. p. 500). ch. ii. § 15.

CHAP. men, are certainly lacking sometimes in ease; but they are  
XXIX. skilful in giving expression. This is the opinion of an Italian artist, who said that "Miss Alexander could express the soul in the face at which most other artists aim"; and it explains the saying of our own Watts that "he would rather have drawn the face of the 'Madonnina' than almost any work he had ever done."<sup>1</sup> "Miss Alexander's work seemed to him to be far the most real thing that he knew, so sincere and true to the producer's feeling that every defect is compensated for, and Watts put the result, therefore, where Ruskin did."<sup>2</sup> Some of her original drawings, which lose much in reproduction, may be seen at Oxford and Sheffield, and others at Girton and Newnham.

In 1887 Ruskin had made some experiments in teaching botany to the school children at Coniston,<sup>3</sup> and he began to write some *Institutes of Botany*, in the form of question and answer, somewhat in the style of *The Ethics of the Dust*. This, however, was not carried beyond a few pages. Another study much in Ruskin's mind during his later years was that of mineralogy. It had been his earliest hobby, and it was the last in which he was able to take interest. He had in equal measure the miser's and the giver's passion. In his own account of himself he says that the former was the ruling one. "Though I am generous too, and love giving, yet my notion of charity is not at all dividing my last crust with a beggar, but riding through a town like a Commander of the Faithful, having any quantity of sequins and ducats in saddle-bags (where cavalry officers have holsters for their pistols), and throwing them round in radiant showers and hailing handfuls; with more bags to brace on when those were empty."<sup>4</sup> He gathered minerals and precious stones like a miser, scattered them abroad, and then, as long as his means permitted, gathered again. His collection at Brantwood, which was especially rich in siliceous minerals, numbered 3000 specimens, many of them of great rarity and interest. It was a favourite

<sup>1</sup> M. H. Spielmann in *Magazine of Art*, June 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Reminiscences of Watts*, by Mrs. Russell Barrington, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> See *Christ's Folk*, chap. iv.

<sup>4</sup> *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 18.

diversion to arrange and rearrange, classify and reclassify, these specimens; and there remain at Brantwood catalogues in various stages of completion. The work into which *Fors Clavigera* had drawn him caused him to begin dispersing his collection. There was the St. George's Museum at Sheffield to be equipped; and while selecting specimens for that, he went on to make up typical collections for various museums and schools in which he was interested. He had long entertained a design "of making mineralogy, no less than botany, a subject of elementary education, even in ordinary parish schools, and much more in our public ones. With this view," he says, "long before the Guild existed I arranged out of my own collection a series of minerals which were found useful at Harrow; and another for a girls' school at Winnington, Northwich, where the lectures on mineralogy were given which I afterwards expanded into the *Ethics of the Dust*."<sup>1</sup> The Harrow series, given in connexion with a lecture in 1866, is arranged in the Butler Museum. What became of the Winnington collection, when the school was broken up, I do not know. In the years 1882-84 Ruskin began forming illustrative collections of siliceous and other minerals. A collection of selected examples at the British Museum was to be the central one; subsidiary to it were to be various other collections in different parts of the country; whilst the whole series was to be further systematised and explained in elementary handbooks. He had a double purpose in this work; he wanted to show how in his opinion a museum of minerals should be arranged, and also to illustrate some of his theories of classification of "banded and concretionary formations." Broken health prevented the accomplishment of his full design; but much of it was carried out, and it is amazing to those who know the extent of his activity in other directions that he should have found time and energy for the catalogues and other work upon mineralogy now collected in the Library Edition. He catalogued a case of silicas in the British Museum, as already related (p. 473); he sent many of his examples to Sheffield, and wrote

<sup>1</sup> *The Guild of St. George: Master's Report*, 1884.



CHAP. various catalogues for them; he presented "Two Hundred  
XXIX. Specimens of Familiar Minerals" to the Museum of Kirkcudbright, and wrote a descriptive catalogue; he did the same for a fourth collection, presented to the Rev. W. H. Churchill's school, then at St. David's, Reigate. A fifth collection, he presented to the Coniston Institute, and he showed a sixth at Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup> He presented smaller collections to Balliol and elsewhere. The six principal collections formed in Ruskin's mind a connected scheme. He was endeavouring "to organize a system of mineralogical instruction for schools, in which the accessible specimens to which it will refer in provincial towns, may be permanently connected by their numbers, both with each other, and with the great central examples of mineralogical structure" in the British Museum.<sup>2</sup> In fulfilment of this purpose, he began (in MS.) the compilation of an Index to the specimens in the various catalogues. It was his intention to supplement these various catalogues by writing an elementary handbook, which was to be called *Institutes of Mineralogy*; and another, dealing exclusively with siliceous minerals, to be called *The Grammar of Silica*. He did not finish this Grammar, but he had some sheets of it put into type. Another work which he planned in his last working years was a *Grammar of Crystallography*. Mr. Fletcher purchased for him a set of models to show the normal forms of crystals, and he made page after page of diagrams in illustration of them; but the strength to bring all this material into form was in the end denied to him. The hours and days spent by Ruskin at the Natural History Museum were among the happiest of his later life. The beauty and the mystery of the minerals filled him ever with greater and greater delight. He writes of his enjoyment of "lovely little fights with the gloves on" with Mr. Fletcher, who presently visited him at Brantwood, and of the pleasure of meeting Dr. Günther. "Ever so much love to that dear Dr. Günther," he wrote (Sandgate, December 26, 1887); "I've a long letter to write to him; meantime

<sup>1</sup> See Lib. Ed., vol. xxvi. p. 519.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to Kirkcudbright Catalogue.

please tell him that if he wants alligators or any other sort of Anti-Georgian monster *drawn*, I can draw them with all their lovely expressions and a mile long, if he orders them by the fathom." His friendship with Mr. Fletcher resulted at this time (1887) in the presentation of two valuable specimens to the Museum—one a diamond, the other a ruby. He had, a few years before, placed the diamond in the Museum on loan; and, after some playful manœuvring, he now formally presented both stones. Mr. Fletcher suggested that the diamond should be named "The Ruskin Diamond." "The diamond," replied Ruskin (Dec. 14, '87), "is not to be called the Ruskin, nor the Catskin, nor the Yellowskin, diamond. It is not worth a name at all, for it may be beaten any minute by a lucky Cape digger. But I will *give* it to the Museum on the condition of their attaching this inscription to it"—the inscription in honour of Colenso which has been printed in an earlier chapter (II.). It is an uncut diamond, a large and symmetrical crystal, weighing 130 carats; Ruskin paid £1000 for it. The ruby bears the following inscription:—

The Edwardes Ruby,  
Presented in 1887 by John Ruskin  
In Honour of the  
Invincible Soldiership  
and Loving Equity  
Of Sir Herbert Edwardes' Rule  
By the Shores of Indus.

Ruskin's strength was now failing, and he did not find himself equal to keeping abreast of new views and theories on the subjects of his inquiry. He had made a new friend, in connexion with these subjects, in Dr. George Harley, F.R.S., author of a work on *Stones and Pearls*. Dr. Harley and his family had visited him at Brantwood:—

"BRANTWOOD, *June 15, 1887*.—It is entirely comforting and exhilarating to me to have your letter and Olga's, and to hear of all those wonderful things in crystals, just when what I thought was clearest in *me* and hardest has become clouded and frangible. For everything I thought I *knew* of minerals (you know, I never

CHAP. *think* except what I thought I knew) has been made mere cloud  
XXIX. and bewilderment by what I find in Judd's address at the Geological of planes of internal motion, etc., and all my final purposes of writing elementary descriptions of them—broken like reeds. I can only now study tadpoles with Olga. . . . Don't send me back the topaz. Let it stay with yours, which it properly companions. I have more here than I shall ever see."<sup>1</sup>

"BRANTWOOD, *June 16, 1887.*—Indeed I *should* like to come, and have a little pink riband fastened by Olga to my breast-buttonhole, and be led wheresoever she chose; and, indeed, I should like not to talk, but to hear of the wonderful things you scientific people are doing, for I am quite crushed now, and am resigned in a pulverulent state of mind to be radiated or coagulated into whatever new forms of belief or apprehension are possible to me in my old age. But, alas! I am not able any more but for the quiet of evening among the hills."

The more Ruskin studied, the more he found to study. The wonder and the beauty of the world grew upon him as he tried to fathom its mysteries and intricacies. "Any man's life," he says, "might be happily spent in merely describing and illustrating the various forms of calcite and galena."<sup>2</sup> "By the time the youngest pupil in the school is ninety, she may know something of the infinitely multiplied interest" to be found in a piece of jasper.<sup>3</sup> Two years before he had written to Mr. Fletcher (October 13, 1885)—with an apology for his "vile always and of late brecciated or conglomerate writing": "This last illness has been a heavy warning to me; and I suppose my British Museum

<sup>1</sup> *George Harley, F.R.S.: The Life of a London Physician.* Edited by his daughter, Mrs. Alec Tweedie. "Olga" is Dr. Harley's younger daughter (then a little girl). When, says Mrs. Tweedie, Ruskin "discovered my sister Olga's love of animal life, he was quite enchanted, and entered into all her enthusiasm and pleasure, just as if he were himself a child;

hand-in-hand the old gentleman and the little girl walked about for hours, he explaining the beauties of Nature and the habits of animal life to her interested little ears."

<sup>2</sup> *Kirkcudbright Catalogue*, No. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Notes on Minerals presented to the Cork High School for Girls, No. 3.

days are over, and that I must be content with quiet mineralogy by my lake shore." Ruskin had now reached the evening of his days; and was content to sit and wonder.

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## V

From London Ruskin returned in May 1888 to Sandgate, where some more weeks were spent in alternate depression and excitement. He determined once again to try the tonic of foreign travel which had proved effectual in 1882. Early in June Mr. Arthur Severn accompanied him to Abbeville and Beauvais, where they stayed for some weeks. "Restored, *D.G.*," he wrote in his diary at Beauvais (July 12), "as far as I can judge, to comparative health, and power of useful and even beautiful work, after the most terrific year of illness and despondency I have yet known." At Abbeville he was arrested, and detained for a while, much to his amusement, for sketching the fortifications. A few letters written thence show some faint traces of his old gaiety and buoyancy. He had much pleasure in the company of Mr. Sydney Carlyle Cockerell and Mr. Detmar Blow, whom he had met at Abbeville, and the young men threw themselves with loyal alacrity into pleasing him. "Carlyle," he wrote to Mrs. Severn (July 7), "carries my umbrella for me as if he were attending the Emperor of Japan," and "Detmar is as good as gold." The enthusiasm and affection of young men and women were always grateful to Ruskin, and he was encouraged to go further afield, and revisit the scenes of dearest memory among the mountains and in Italy. Mr. Detmar Blow was free to accompany him, and after some days in Paris (where illness again threatened) they journeyed over "the old road" to Dijon, the Jura, Geneva, and Sallenches. The little scraps of diary which he sent in daily notes to Mrs. Severn show him yet once more in some power of enjoyment:—

"(DIJON, 29th Aug. '88.)—I had the most wonderful day yesterday I ever had here—*such* a drive up the hills in crystal clear sunshine—seeing Jura—by St. Bernard's birthplace, La Fontaine,



CHAP. and down through one of those dingles you heard the nightingales  
XXIX. sing in ! Also discovered no end of wonderful things in the town,  
and wrote finish of the fine *Præterita*, introducing Norton ! ” <sup>1</sup>

“(MOREZ, JURA, *Auntie’s* <sup>2</sup> *Birthday*, 1888, *September 2nd.*)—  
That ever I should have such a happy birthday morning again !  
*Quite* well, as far as I know, all round—enjoying the mountains  
as I never did before—and drawing better than ever. Detmar  
sketched a Jura cottage, and I painted it for him yesterday at St.  
Laurent, . . . and I saw such loveliness of pines in my afternoon  
walk as never yet in all my days. And this is all your doing, my  
Joanie, giving me strawberry teas and comfort when I was in utter  
despair of myself. Heaven keep you and yours happy.”

“(SALLENCHES, 11th *Sept.*)—You can’t think the joy it is to me  
being at this old inn—and to-day it was, for the first time, fine  
like old times, and I’ve been up far among the granite boulders of  
the torrent, breaking stones in my old way. Life given back to  
me. And the stone-crop, and the ragged robin, on the granite  
among the moss.”

At Sallenches Ruskin wrote the last chapter but one of  
*Præterita*, containing mainly recollections of Miss La Touche.  
“Some wise, and prettily mannered, people have told me  
that I shouldn’t say anything about Rosie at all. But I am  
too old now to take advice, and I won’t have this following  
letter—the first she ever wrote to me—moulder away, when  
I can read it no more, lost to all loving hearts.” “I wish  
so very much,” the child had written, “that you were happy  
—God can make you so.” But God had led Ruskin “by  
other ways,” as he said,<sup>3</sup> and much else than happiness was  
still to be his portion. The “Life given back” was soon  
to be overclouded. At Chamouni he wrote the beautiful  
Epilogue to *Modern Painters*<sup>4</sup> after “a night of perfect  
rest,” as he notes in his diary (Sept. 16), and “in the per-  
fected light of Mont Blanc, after being at Mass.” From  
Chamouni, he went by Martigny to Brieg, and over the Sim-  
plon Pass. “I never thought the old Hospice so beautiful,

<sup>1</sup> Chap. ii. of vol. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Ruskin’s mother.

<sup>3</sup> See the passage prefixed to Chap. XVI., above, p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Vol. I. p. 507.

nor anything so beautiful, and feel I could paint it all, *now*, if I had life." He stayed at Baveno, and then went by the lake to Milan and on to Verona. Thence he went to Bassano, to stay with Miss Francesca Alexander in her summer-quarters—"Among the kindest people in the world," he notes (Sept. 28). Next, he went to Venice, and spent some days at the Albergo Europa. He struck visitors as very frail and somewhat vague in talk. He was pleased when the Countess Pisani called upon him and gave him a gold ducat of Venice for his Museum. He spoke with approval of the work at the Ducal Palace which was carried out under his friend, Signor Boni. Another visitor was Dr. Robertson, author of *The Bible of St. Mark* and Presbyterian chaplain at Venice, who on calling explained who he was. "What a blessed thing it is," said Ruskin, "to be able to do anything for the cause of Christ!" Dr. Robertson spoke of the influence of Ruskin's work, and in particular mentioned something said of it by Professor Drummond. "I am astonished," replied Ruskin; "I feel as if I had only led a selfish, useless life."<sup>1</sup> The excitement of visitors and old associations at Venice was too great for him:—

(To A. ALESSANDRI.) "VENICE, Oct. 1888.—DEAREST ALESSANDRI,—I was just going to bring you this note and enclosure when you came in with the dear Signor Boni. I am in more pain at going away than I can tell you, but there have been symptoms of illness threatening me now for some time which I cannot conquer—but by getting away from the elements of imagination which haunt me here. I am at least thankful to have seen what noble work you are doing—and to have heard Boni for that happy hour. Ever your affectionate."

He retreated to Switzerland, staying for some days in November at Merligen on the Lake of Thun, whence he wrote to Mrs. Severn:—

"(MERLIGEN, Sunday, 11th Nov.)—The gentians I sent you a day or two ago were gathered by Detmar—higher than I can climb now: but I got up a good way this afternoon, and found two

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<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin in Venice," *Good Words*, July 1900.

CHAP. bluebells, which I love better for my Joanie's sake than all the Swiss  
XXIX. flowers that ever grew. This is a perfect village of Swiss cottages. Not a shop in it but one for general groceries, in the upper story of the water-mill, and a watchmaker's—without a watch visible."

This was a last gleam. The foreign tour of 1888 had no such recruiting effect as that of 1882. Throughout the tour, though still able to apply himself to occasional work not involving mental excitement, he had been liable to fits of terrible despondency and strange imaginations, whenever he allowed his mind to dwell on personal interests. He had been the victim of occasional delusions and impossible fancies. This mood now culminated. He was taken seriously ill at Paris in December, whither Mrs. Severn hastened. She found him full of morbid and painful delusions. She brought him back to Herne Hill, and presently to Brantwood. When he was able to think of work once more, he took up *Præterita*. But his strength was gone, and the fulfilment of the plan was laid aside. There was one chapter, however, which he could not abandon, so long as the pen and brain were in any sort equal to obeying the promptings of the heart. This was the record of his long companionship with Mrs. Severn, who had come into his home when his father died, and who still remained to him. The last chapter of *Præterita*, "Joanna's Care," was no afterthought; it and its title were included in the first plans of the book, but this was all that he could now save from the wreck of his design. He went in the summer of 1889 for sea air to Seascale on the Cumberland coast, and it was there that this last piece was written. It was composed, though in the closing words with some of his old grace and skill, yet throughout with painful difficulty. As he sat in his bedroom with the paper before him morning after morning he could barely collect his thoughts, or concentrate his words upon any consecutive theme. It was on this occasion that he made also his last drawings. His return to Brantwood was followed by another attack incapacitating him from any mental effort. He never left his home again until the last journey came.

## CHAPTER XXX

### CLOSING YEARS

(1889-1900)

“Sleepe after toyle, port after stormy seas.”

“NOTE these three great divisions—essentially those of all men’s lives, but singularly separate in his,—the days of youth, of labour, and of death. Youth is properly the forming time—that in which a man makes himself, or is made, what he is for ever to be. Then comes the time of labour, when, having become the best he can be, he does the best he can do. Then the time of death, which, in happy lives, is very short; but always a *time*. The ceasing to breathe is only the *end* of death.”—So Ruskin had written in *Fors Clavigera*<sup>1</sup> of Sir Walter Scott. He had marked the passage in his copy of the book, upon re-reading it at some later date. His own “*time* of death” lasted nearly eleven years.

#### I

The attack of brain-fever which followed Ruskin’s return to Brantwood from Seascale in August 1889 was severe, and it was not till the following summer that he was able to leave his room. He now recognised perforce that absolute rest and quiet were essential, and gradually even the will to exert himself passed away. It is needless to follow in any detail these years of waiting for the end—years in which times of mental storm were intermingled with the peace of old age. He wrote nothing more, and spoke very little, and with hardly any voice. He sat, and listened, and

<sup>1</sup> Letter 33 (September 1873).



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XXX.

sometimes smiled, but even for children and for old friends he had few words. "He seemed interested in what one said," Mr. Holman Hunt told me, after a visit to Brantwood during these years, "and sometimes would recur on a later day to some point I had mentioned before; but for the most part he spoke hardly at all." A year or two later, in August 1897, Mr. Walter Crane was at Brantwood:—

"He looked the shadow of his former self—the real living man with all his energy and force had gone, and only the shadow remained. He was carefully dressed and scrupulously neat, having gloves on, which, seeing a visitor approach, he began to pull off rather absently, when Mrs. Severn said, 'Never mind the gloves'; and I took his hand, but alas! he had nothing but monosyllables, and soon went off supported on the arm of his constant attendant. . . . Another time Mrs. Severn brought me into his room, where Ruskin sat in his arm-chair. He had a benign expression, and looked venerable and prophetic, with a long flowing beard, but he seemed disinclined to talk, and when I spoke of things which might have interested him he only said yes or no, or smiled, or bowed his head." <sup>1</sup>

The pen was as silent as the tongue. Even the physical power to write became atrophied. "The only person I am sorry to disappoint," he said in one of his illnesses, "is poor Miss Greenaway," and letters to her are among the last he ever wrote. Sometimes he was unable to send any written response, but he took a keen pleasure in hearing what she had to say or in looking at the little pictures she enclosed. "Your lovely letter," wrote Mrs. Severn, "with the sweet little people looking from the ridge of the hill at the rising sun, so delighted Di Pa.<sup>2</sup> He looked at it long and lovingly, and kept repeating, 'Beautiful! beautiful! and beautiful!'" And so, when the clouds gathered round him, Miss Greenaway continued to write to him almost daily, to the end; seeking to interest him, as she hoped, in any books, or sights, or doings which pleased her.

<sup>1</sup> *An Artist's Reminiscences*, p. 446.

Ruskin at Brantwood (originating with Mr. and Mrs. Severn's children).  
<sup>2</sup> A pet name (Dear Papa) for

One of the last letters which he wrote with his own hand was read, in October 1893, to his aged friend, Miss Susan Beever, on her death-bed:—

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XXX.

BRANTWOOD,

CONISTON LAKE,

R. S. O.

Dearest Susie

I am so sorry the illness  
is not yet abating - it was the weary  
autumn-time and you let yourself be  
so much fatigued - and you must feel the  
shortening of the light - but I cannot think  
of you except as cheerful and conquering all  
minor suffering - in all sympathy ever your  
grateful and loving Phoca

"Phoca" was the "seal" with which he had sometimes signed himself in playful letters to his old friend. It took him three hours to fashion this little note of eight faltering lines. A few months later he was able to send a few words to Sir John and Lady Simon:—

(From LADY SIMON.) "March 5, '94.—How very, very good of you, dearest Mr. John, to write us such a kind letter! We are very deeply grateful, and your faithful 'Brother John' was quite overcome at the sight of the dear familiar writing. I am sure you know that you are a constant presence in our lives, and John often longs to see you. We send our dear love to you, and are, as ever, your loving John and Jane Simon."

(From SIR JOHN SIMON.) "DEAREST BROTHER JOHN,—Though

CHAP. Jane has, as always, identified me with her few words to you, yet  
 XXX. let me, in my own aged handwriting, add a word to say for myself how very, very glad I am to see again afresh your signs of life, and to know that you are fairly strong for the calms though not for the frictions of time. My life is drawing to its close; for, as you know, I am not only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years by calendar ahead of you, but am, of late, sadly aged and failing in strength; but you will know that, while I live, my best wishes are ever with you, and that my affection will go on to the end.—Ever lovingly yours, J. S."

On the death of Gladstone in 1898, Ruskin wanted to write to Mrs. Drew, and "sat an hour or more pen in hand, but could get no further than the words: 'Dear Mary, I am grieved at the death of your father—' and no more would come—to him who was a fountain of divine words once."<sup>1</sup> The last time he signed his name was, I believe, in 1897, when he added it to an address presented to his old friend Watts on the painter's eightieth birthday. Mr. Allen, who went to see him about this time, told me that Ruskin talked a little of old days in Switzerland. Then he held out his finger and thumb, and said, half regretfully, that they would never hold pen again. "But, after all," he added, with a smile, "they have brought me into so much trouble that perhaps it's as well they should rest." He sat in the peace of folded hands, as he is shown in the beautiful photograph, now widely known, by Mr. Hollyer, taken in 1896. "He lifted his voice," said Canon Scott Holland in describing the portrait, "in praise of high and noble things through an evil and dark day; and now he sits there, silent and at peace, waiting for the word that will release him and open to him a world where he may gaze on the vision of Perfect Beauty unhindered and unashamed."<sup>2</sup> He was in the world, but no longer of it. He was alive, yet only waiting for the end. In 1891 his friend, the Bishop of Carlisle, was staying at Brantwood:—

"The Bishop was to leave Brantwood at an early hour. Mr. Ruskin expressed a strong wish to take leave of him and Mrs.

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<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii. p. 342.

<sup>2</sup> *The Commonwealth* July 1896.

Goodwin, if they would not mind coming to his bedroom. As the departing guests came into the room to say good-bye, a look came over Mr. Ruskin's face as though he had expected something more than the ordinary leave-taking. There was a moment's silence. Then the Bishop, quickly understanding what was passing in the other's mind, raised his hands over him, and said, 'The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore. Amen.'"<sup>1</sup>

## II

There were times, however, even during these dark and silent years, when Ruskin recovered something of his old zest for life, and enjoyed the gift of peace. As late as 1893 he appeared in public at Coniston, attending a concert of the Choral Society, and applauding the performers.<sup>2</sup> In the same year his old friend Sir Henry Acland visited him. Ruskin was still fond of his game of chess or a rubber of whist; but "as the two sages talked the whole time *de omni scibili*, and showed one another their hands for purposes of comparison and advice, the game was scarcely up to the standard of the late Mrs. Martha Battle."<sup>3</sup> It was at this time that Ruskin gave his last message to the world. Acland was proposing to re-issue the book written by himself and Ruskin thirty-five years before on *The Oxford Museum*; and Ruskin dictated the following words:—

"Say to my friends in the Oxford Museum from me, May God bless the reverent and earnest study of Nature and of Man, to His glory, to the better teaching of the Future, to the benefit of our Country, and to the good of all Mankind.

"JOHN RUSKIN.

"BRANTWOOD, CONISTON,

"August 14, 1893."

Another friend who visited Brantwood in the same year

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Harvey Goodwin*, by the *minster Gazette*, April 8, 1893.  
Rev. H. D. Rawnsley, p. 325.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Atlay's *Memoir of*

<sup>2</sup> Duly recorded in the *West- Acland*, p. 316.



CHAP. found Ruskin still able to rouse himself to some anima-  
XXX. tion:—

“He sat crouched like an old lion in his arm-chair, the fine Della Robbia Madonna above his head, a vase filled with pansies beside him, some glowing minerals on a central table, a large globe in one corner, choice books in their recessed cases. He was, as always, carefully dressed, with perhaps the extra neatness of an invalid, the historic blue tie showing through his long beard as he stroked and parted it, the eyes shining from under shaggy brows. Torpid at first and whispering, he grew animated as the interview proceeded. Pointing inquiringly to a college badge worn on his visitor’s coat, he murmured some indistinct sentences about Oxford, in which Acland’s name was audible. He chuckled mainly over an anecdote of an American lady, who boasted of having unloosed the tongues of silent Oxford dons at dinner-tables by begging them to explain the meaning of ‘Fors Clavigera.’ He caused some of his treasured autograph Waverley Novels to be brought down, pointing out the beauty of the clear manuscript, without erasures or corrections. Of *St. Ronan’s Well* he said as we turned the leaves, ‘An unfortunate attempt.’”<sup>1</sup>

For some years Ruskin could still do a little gardening, and he took frequent walks, when he would sometimes be waylaid by curious admirers, who recorded their encounters in various American journals. His valet, Baxter, read the newspapers to him, and he still took some interest in passing affairs, as is shown by an occasional letter written to the papers by Mrs. Severn for him or with his approval. He was interested in an exhibition of Icelandic industries (1890); he was indignant at the threatened destruction of the Falls of Foyers (1895); and he dictated his views on the restoration of Peterborough Cathedral (1896). He was also still fond of reading aloud and of being read to, and made acquaintance during these years with books by S. R. Crockett and Rudyard Kipling. With *A Fleet in Being* he was intensely interested, reading it over and over again. Many books were sent to him, and sometimes he was coaxed into saying something

<sup>1</sup> *The Athenæum*, October 17, 1908.

about them. A letter from Mr. Arthur Severn to F. T. Palgrave, whose *Landscape in Poetry* had been sent to Brantwood, describes the scene:—

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“(BRANTWOOD, *June 1, 1897.*)—DEAR PALGRAVE,—I found your book to-day, and put it into the Professor’s hands. It had been rather mislaid with other books, and he had not seen it. Many books come here for the Professor to see, but he will hardly ever look at any. He demurred at yours even! But I explained about it, etc., etc. . . . I put the book into his hands, open at the second chapter, put on his spectacles, drew up his blind, then sat like a mouse, waiting for any pearls of criticism! which might come. Some did come, and I took down as well as I could what I thought of interest and not too unpearl-like! . . . The following are some of the remarks:—

“‘The range from Dante to Blake and Wordsworth is so curious.’ ‘I am amazed at the quantity he gets out of Wordsworth.’ ‘It goes in among people one has never heard of.’ ‘I can’t even read their Latin as they write it now.’”<sup>1</sup>

It was the old favourites, however, that he loved best, and he was never weary of Scott and Miss Edgeworth.

### III

Ruskin himself was in seclusion, but his books were becoming more and more widely known throughout the world. His scheme of publishing had completely justified itself in the end; he had created his market, and edition after edition of his books was called for. The fortune he inherited from his father had been dispersed in innumerable gifts to friends, relations, pensioners, and institutions; but the income from his books was now large and steadily maintained. His publisher, Mr. Allen, had many schemes to suggest. Ruskin assented, and cheaper re-issues of old books, and issues of hitherto unpublished lectures, etc., were put forth. He assented, but no longer read proofs or transacted

<sup>1</sup> *Francis Turner Palgrave: his Journals and Memories of his Life*, by Gwennllian F. Palgrave, pp. 254–255.

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XXX.

any business—the editorial work in connexion with the publications of these years being entrusted either to Mr. Collingwood or to Mr. Wedderburn. “I’m afraid,” Ruskin said to a friend, “the public take more interest in my books than I do now myself.”<sup>1</sup> The public which thus took interest was becoming international. In France, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia, translations, essays, and appreciations began to appear. In January 1892 he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Belgian Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Arts, “in testimony of the esteem in which the Academy held him.” The honorary degree of D.C.L. at Oxford, offered in 1879, but postponed owing to his ill-health, was conferred upon him in November 1893 by a resolution of Convocation “to dispense with his attendance in the House for admission to the degree with the customary formalities, any usage or precedent notwithstanding.” On his eightieth birthday (1899) he was the recipient of Complimentary Addresses from the learned and artistic Societies of Great Britain, and of congratulatory letters and telegrams from many parts of the world. The principal Address was presented by a small deputation at Brantwood. Ruskin was able to see them. “As I read over the terms of the address,” says Mr. J. H. Whitehouse, “and the signatures it contained, he listened intently and with evident emotion. When I had finished he could only utter a few broken words.”<sup>2</sup>

#### IV

His strength was now ebbing rapidly. The death of his dearly loved friend, Edward Burne-Jones, in 1898, had been a great blow. “One night, going up to bed, the old man stopped long to look at the photograph from Philip Burne-Jones’s portrait of his father. ‘That’s my dear brother Ned,’ he said, nodding good-bye to the picture as he went.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, September 21, 1898. 1899,” in *St. George*, vol. ii. p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *Life and*

<sup>2</sup> “At Brantwood, 8th February *Work of John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 402.

Burne-Jones died the next day. Ruskin's daily walks had been given up, and he was confined to the house, except for occasional airings in a bath-chair on sunny mornings. If the day were very fine, it would be wheeled to a favourite seat, on a little eminence beside the lake, which commands his favourite view over the waters to Helvellyn. But soon even this amount of exercise had to be abandoned, and he divided his time between his bedroom and the turret-room next to it. His eyesight had failed him for smaller type, and Mrs. Severn bought him a larger-typed Bible, which he read or had read to him constantly up to his death. But for the most part he sat silent, unoccupied except for gazing at lake, fell, and sky.

It was this love of natural beauty that alone of his pleasures remained with him to the end. He had said to a visitor some years before, to whom he was showing the Turners in his bedroom, "When I die, I hope that they may be the last things my eyes will rest on in this world."<sup>1</sup> And so it was to be. But it was noticed that in the end nature seemed to assert a victory over art, even as he had said: "You will never love art well till you love what she mirrors better."<sup>2</sup> "My Turners," he sometimes said to Mrs. Severn, with a puzzled smile, "seem to have lost something of their radiance." Well, "the best in this sort are but shadows." But he never wearied of watching the play of light and shade upon lake or mountain, and the changing aspects of the sky. The words of the poet, whose disciple he had proclaimed himself to be on the title-page of *Modern Painters*, were fulfilled: "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." The voice and pen, which had done so much to interpret and reveal the beauties of art and nature, were silent; the eager brain and tender heart which had turned the interpreter of beauty into the prophet or the sage, had worn themselves out in conflict with the fever of the world. But one likes to think that to this lifelong lover of Nature, as he sat day after day in his eyrie, there came sometimes "that blessed mood" of which Wordsworth speaks; that

<sup>1</sup> *George Harley, F.R.S.*, by his daughter, Mrs. Alec Tweedie, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Eagle's Nest*, § 41.



CHAP. "the burthen and the mystery" were lightened; and that  
XXX. with some "deep power of joy" he "saw into the life of things."

The end, for which Ruskin had waited so long, came suddenly and peacefully. "On the morning of Thursday, the 18th of January 1900, he was remarkably well; but when Mrs. Arthur Severn went to him as usual after tea, in order to read to him the war news and *In the Golden Days*, by Edna Lyall, his throat seemed irritable. His cousin was alarmed, for several of her servants were ill with influenza; but the Professor was inclined to laugh it off, although he said he did not feel well, and admitted, when questioned, that he felt pain 'all over.' Helped by his faithful body-servant Baxter, he was put to bed, and he listened whilst Mrs. Severn sang a much-liked song, 'Summer Slumber.' It was now 6.30, and Ruskin declared that he felt quite comfortable. Nevertheless, Dr. Parsons was immediately summoned. He found the temperature to be 102, and pronounced the illness to be influenza, which might be very grave if the patient's strength were not kept up. That evening the Professor enjoyed a dinner consisting of sole and pheasant and champagne, and on Friday he seemed to be much better. On Saturday morning there was a change so marked that the doctor was alarmed, and from that time Ruskin sank into an unconscious state, and the breathing lessened in strength, until, at 3.30, it faded away in a peaceful sleep. He was holding the hand of Mrs. Severn, and Dr. Parsons and Baxter stood by, now and then feathering the lips with brandy and spraying the head with eau de Cologne. And so he passed away, amid silence and desolation. Then, a little later, when the first shock was over, Mrs. Severn's daughter prevailed upon her to look from his little turret window at the sunset, as Ruskin was wont to look for it from day to day. The brilliant, gorgeous light illumined the hills with splendour; and the spectators felt as if Heaven's gate itself had been flung open to receive the teacher into everlasting peace."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This description of Ruskin's last days is reprinted from the *Times* of January 23, 1900; it was communicated by Mrs. Severn.

V

The opinion was generally expressed that Ruskin should be buried in Westminster Abbey. A memorial to that effect was presented to the Dean and Chapter. The Chapter was unanimously in accord, and a grave in the Abbey—close to that of Tennyson, in Poets' Corner—was offered. Ruskin, however, had often said to Mrs. Severn, "If I die at Herne Hill I wish to rest with my parents in Shirley Churchyard, but if at Brantwood, then I would prefer to rest at Coniston." Feeling bound by this expressed wish, she declined the offer of the Dean and Chapter, and on Thursday, January 25, Ruskin was buried in the churchyard of Coniston, a Memorial Service being held at the same time in the Abbey. The coffin was covered with a pall given by the Ruskin Linen Industry of Keswick, lined with bright crimson silk, and embroidered with the motto, "Unto this Last." Wreaths from all sorts and conditions of friends and admirers—from the Princess Louise to the village tailor—were heaped upon the coffin. Two were especially significant. One was a Wreath of Olive, sent by Watts from the tree in his garden, cut only thrice before—for Tennyson, and Leighton, and Burne-Jones. The other was Mrs. Severn's cross of Red Roses. The grave is next to that of Miss Susan Beever—the old friend to whom he had written a few years before, "Why should we wear black for the guests of God?"

Ruskin's will (dated October 23, 1883) showed the affection which he had for his home at Coniston. It says:—

"I leave all my estate of Brantwood aforesaid and all other real estate of which I may die possessed to Joseph Arthur Palliser Severn, and Joanna Ruskin Severn, his wife, and to the survivor of them and their heirs for their very own, earnestly praying them never to sell the estate of Brantwood or any part thereof, nor to let upon building lease any part thereof, but to maintain the said estate and the buildings thereon in decent order and in good repair in like manner as I have done, and praying them further to accord

CHAP. during thirty consecutive days in every year such permission to  
XXX. strangers to see the house and pictures as I have done in my lifetime." <sup>1</sup>

The memorial stone, placed in the following year at the head of the grave, is a monolith, carved from Mr. Collingwood's design, with symbols of Ruskin's life and work. In Westminster Abbey the memorial of Ruskin took the form of a bronze medallion, showing his face in profile, surrounded with a branch of Wild Olive. The monument, executed by Onslow Ford, was erected by a body of subscribers, and was unveiled by Mrs. Severn and the Dean on February 8, 1902. The medallion is placed in Poets' Corner, immediately above the bust of Sir Walter Scott. Of local memorials there were several. One, very simple and beautiful, is a monolith, with a medallion portrait, which now stands on Friar's Crag, Derwentwater. It was unveiled by Mrs. Severn on October 6, 1900. At Coniston itself the memorial to Ruskin took the form first of a "Ruskin Exhibition" held from July to September 1900. Various gifts and loans made to this exhibition, and the sale of several of Ruskin's drawings shown at it, enabled the Committee to build a permanent "Ruskin Museum," attached to the Coniston Institute. This was opened in August 1901, and has become a haunt of hero-worshippers in the Lake District. Another memorial was a village library, art gallery, and museum at Mr. Cadbury's model village at Bournville, near Birmingham. This scheme originated with the Ruskin Society of that city. The foundation-stone was laid by Lord Avebury in October 1902. Ruskin desired, as we have seen, to rest with his parents in Shirley Churchyard, in the event of his dying at Herne Hill. On the granite tombstone which Ruskin had inscribed in memory of his father and his mother, Mrs. Severn added on the north side an inscription to the son. In the Church of St. Paul's, Herne Hill, a monumental tablet was also erected to Ruskin's memory.

<sup>1</sup> In 1885 he made over Brantwood to Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn by deed of gift, confirming this settlement by a codicil of the

same date. He appointed Mrs. Severn, Professor Norton, and Mr. Wedderburn his literary executors.

This was unveiled by Mr. Holman Hunt on Ruskin's birthday, February 8, 1901. Another local scheme which was promoted in part as a memorial to Ruskin was the acquisition—by grants from municipal bodies and by public subscription—of a “Ruskin Park” near his old home on Denmark Hill. The park was opened on February 2, 1907. At Oxford, no memorial to Ruskin was set up; but his bust had already been presented to the University by a body of subscribers in 1880, and at the Encænna following his death, the Public Orator in his address upon the events of the year dwelt upon the loss which Oxford had sustained. Venice took occasion, in connexion with an International Art Congress in 1905, to commemorate the author of *The Stones*. On September 21, a meeting in honour of Ruskin's memory was held in the Ducal Palace at which, in the presence of the King and Queen of Italy, M. Robert de la Sizeranne delivered an eulogium.<sup>1</sup> In the English church of St. George, in the same city, a memorial window has been placed. And last among memorials to Ruskin came the Library Edition of his Works. Another tribute had already been paid in the Complimentary Address presented to him on his recovery from illness, at Christmas 1885:—

“Thankfully rejoicing at your recovery from recent illness, we ask you to accept the expression of our earnest hope that you may long be enabled to continue the work of your life.

“Work so wide and various as yours appeals to us in different ways, but without professing to be in agreement with every detail of your teaching, we are heartily and gratefully united in the conviction that your genius has been a great gift, nobly used by you for the benefit of your country and the world; and that your writings have proved, and will increasingly prove, a source of strength and joy to the English-speaking race.

“Those of us who have made a special study of economic and social questions desire to convey to you their deep sense of the value of your work in these subjects, pre-eminently in its enforcement of the doctrines:—

That Political Economy can furnish sound laws of national

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 313.



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XXX.

life and work only when it respects the dignity and moral destiny of man.

That the wise use of wealth, in developing a complete human life, is of incomparably greater moment both to men and nations than its production or accumulation, and can alone give these any vital significance.

That honourable performance of duty is more truly just than rigid enforcement of right; and that not in competition but in helpfulness, not in self-assertion but in reverence, is to be found the power of life.

It is both our hope and our belief that your advocacy of principles such as these, by its suggestive analysis no less than by the inspiration of its eloquence, will be powerfully felt in the social and economic teaching of the future, and in our national life.

"In Art and Science we one and all acknowledge the quickening and purifying virtue of your work and writings. They have rescued monuments of man's noblest efforts from forgetfulness and sometimes from destruction, and have given back to our eyes the hills and clouds as from a fresh consecration. Apart from their effect on those specially interested in the Arts, they have created in many a plain citizen a new sense for the beauty of familiar things, awakening a perception of the influence which that beauty is capable of exercising on everyday life, and manifesting with startling force how grievously the life of multitudes is stunted by the ugliness, both physical and moral, of our great cities.

"Above all, that which gives your teaching its ennobling and beneficent character is the unfaltering conviction, expressed in words we can never forget, that at the root of all excellence of art, all perception in science, and all true national greatness, lie the old homely virtues; whose larger meaning and scope, in their bearing on our age, you have exhibited in so strong and new a light.

"Mindful of this, and of much that each could only say for himself, we would recall, as fittest expression of our gratitude and reverence, the words in which you have yourself spoken of your 'friend and guide,' Thomas Carlyle, as one 'who has asked England to be brave for the help of Man, and just for the love of God.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The list of signatures is headed with those of Helen. Duchess of Albany, Tennyson, and Browning. Among the others are

Such are the services which leaders of thought in England and America felt that Ruskin had rendered to his generation. Time will show whether Ruskin's books were for his own day only, or for posterity as well. It were idle to predict too confidently in either sense; but we shall reason somewhat of the matter, if the reader will bear with me, in the final chapter.

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the names of the Marquis of Ripon, Bishop Lightfoot, Lord and Lady Mount-Temple, Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Lord and Lady Aberdeen, Bishop Harvey Goodwin, Canon (afterwards Bishop) Westcott, Dean Bradley; Professor Max Müller, Professor Jebb, Professor B. H. Kennedy, Sir Henry Acland, and many other leading members of the universities; Sir Theodore and Lady Martin; Miss Octavia Hill; Watts, Stacy Marks, Briton Rivière, John M'Whirter,

Holman Hunt, Sir Noel Paton; Sir Charles and Lady Dilke; Professor F. A. Walker, M. Émile de Laveleye, Professor H. S. Foxwell, and many other economists; Alfred Russel Wallace, W. H. Flower, T. G. Bonney, J. Prescott Joule, and other Fellows of the Royal Society; Henry Broadhurst, M.P., and Thomas Burt, M.P.; a large number of professors in Canadian and American universities; and many other persons distinguished in all walks of life.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### CHARACTERISTICS

“Tenderness of feeling and susceptibility to generous emotions are accidents of temperament, goodness is an achievement of the will and a quality of the life. How far are his own life and deed in accordance with what he preaches? The only conclusive evidence of a man’s sincerity is that he gives *himself* for a principle.”—LOWELL.

I DO not propose to attempt any elaborately sententious summing-up of the life and character of Ruskin. There is no reason why a biographer should assume the functions of a judge. Besides, the character of a man with any strongly-marked personality discloses itself in his life and works. I have told the story of Ruskin’s life fully, and have striven to tell it faithfully. If the telling has not served to reveal the essential character of the man, the work has been done so ill that I could not hope to redeem the failure by any summary statements of my own. But some side-lights may be thrown by the portraits which Ruskin drew of himself, and by the impression which his manner and his conversation made upon friends and acquaintances. And this final collection of *personalia* may also give incidental opportunity for adding a few details to the picture and emphasising one or two points already made.

#### I

Of Ruskin’s personal appearance, many varying accounts have been given. He is often spoken of as short in stature, but this is not correct. “I grant, alas!” wrote Mrs. Severn in 1891,<sup>1</sup> “that in the last ten years he has stooped so much that he has shrunk into what might be considered

<sup>1</sup> To M. H. Spielmann : see his *John Ruskin*, p. 154.

by some people a little man; but about twenty-five years ago, I should certainly have called him much above the average height. And as a young man he was well over 5 feet 10 inches—indeed, almost 5 feet 11 inches; and people who knew him then would have called him tall.”<sup>1</sup> Richmond’s portrait of 1842, given as the frontispiece to the first volume, is of a tall, slight man. The stoop and hunched appearance of the back in old age is already discernible in the photograph of 1885, given as the frontispiece to the present volume. The beard was allowed to grow after the illness of 1878. “The mouth,” said Woolner, the sculptor, “is the most expressive of all features; but Ruskin as a boy had one of his lips bitten by a dog, and one cannot read his mouth accurately. The main force of his head is perception, this faculty being unusually developed. His expression is varied beyond all example in my experience.”<sup>2</sup>

None of the painted or sculptured portraits can be considered wholly satisfactory. Unfortunately he was not among the eminent men of the time painted by Watts. “It would have been impossible for me to attempt it,” he said, for “I should have felt paralysed in Ruskin’s presence.” In 1866 Ruskin gave sittings to Burne-Jones, who made some drawings, but these were not preserved. In 1899 a scheme was set on foot for having his portrait painted by Holman Hunt, but the state of Ruskin’s health rendered it impossible for the necessary sittings to be arranged. The portraits by Millais make Ruskin too weak. Richmond flattered, or, as the painter himself put it, “told the truth lovingly.” Rossetti’s crayon-drawing (at Oxford) is an utter failure. Herkomer’s water-colour (National Portrait Gallery) is too soft and lacks force of character. Mr. Dressler’s bust (National Gallery) is too wild. Perhaps on the whole Boehm’s bust (at Oxford) is the best; but sculpture can only suggest the eyes; and “the main good of my face, as of my life,” said Ruskin of himself, “is in the eyes,—and only in those seen near.”<sup>3</sup> They were of

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Furnivall’s description, Vol. I, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Magazine of Art*, 1891, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 43.



CHAP. purest blue. "They've been photographing me again," he  
XXXI. wrote in old age to Miss Beever, "and I'm an orang-outang  
as usual, and am in despair. I thought with my beard I  
was beginning to be just the least bit nice to look at. I  
would gladly give up half my books for a new profile."  
Mrs. Drew called him Aprile, referring to *Paracelsus*:—

"And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue  
Nearly set free, so far they rise above  
The painful fruitless striving of the brow."

He was pleased by "the lovely lines"; "I like them," he wrote (Feb. 1, 1879), "because that child I told you of, who died, who wasn't usually by way of paying me compliments, *did* once say 'Those eyes' after looking into them awhile."

## II

Of Ruskin's character, a concentrated piece of self-portraiture, though drawn in allusive colours, is the passage in a preface of 1871<sup>1</sup> wherein he names three of the persons in past history with whom he had most sympathy. The first is an Italian poet. "In all that is strongest and deepest in me," he says,— "that fits me for my work, and gives light or shade to my being, I have sympathy with Guido Guinicelli." Guinicelli's canzone, "Of the Gentle Heart," gives, I think, the clue:<sup>2</sup>—

"Let no man predicate  
That aught the name of gentleness should have,  
Even in a king's estate,  
Except the heart there be a gentle man's.  
The star-beam lights the wave,—  
Heaven holds the star and the star's radiance."

It is to this poem that Dante refers in the *Vita Nuova*:—

"Love and the gentle heart are one same thing,  
Even as the wise man in his ditty saith."

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<sup>1</sup> The preface to the edition of 1871 of *Sesame and Lilies*.

<sup>2</sup> See also above, p. 276. For earlier pieces of self-portraiture, see Vol. I. pp. 473, 490.

Ruskin's self-portraiture, in confessing his sympathy with the poet of "The Gentle Heart," recalls the simple words in which a wise judge of men recorded his impression of the author of *Sesame and Lilies*. "He is," wrote Jowett, after a visit to Brantwood, "the gentlest and most innocent of mankind."<sup>1</sup> This is a side of Ruskin's personality which impressed all the friends who knew him best. "I am sure he has wings under his flannel jacket," wrote Dr. John Brown; "he is not a man, but a stray angel, who has singed his wings a little and tumbled into our sphere."<sup>2</sup> There is "a ray of real heaven in Ruskin," said Carlyle, "a celestial brightness";<sup>3</sup> and a copy of *The Early Kings of Norway* was inscribed "To my dear and ethereal Ruskin, whom God preserve." Ruskin, said Lady Mount-Temple, "gives a halo to life."

But there was another Ruskin. The "gentlest of mankind" was one of the most vituperative of writers. "In my enforced and accidental temper," he goes on, "and thoughts of things and people, I have sympathy with Dean Swift." "I have been reading Dean Swift's Life," he wrote to his mother (from Baveno, May 6, 1869), "and *Gulliver's Travels* again. Putting the delight in dirt, which is a mere disease, aside, Swift is very like me, in most things, in opinions exactly the same." When confronted by the shame and hypocrisies of the world, Ruskin felt to the full Swift's *sceva indignatio*, and the indignation lacerated his heart. The scorn which he poured, especially in later years, upon the pursuits, ambitions, institutions of men and women around him, and the biting irony with which he tipped his sarcasms, link him—in other respects so unlike—with the author of the *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. And of Ruskin also it is true, as Swift admitted of himself, that while he "detested the animal called man," he "heartily loved John, Peter, Thomas." I have illustrated this point in an earlier chapter.<sup>4</sup> The parallel which Ruskin drew in

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. ii. p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Dr. John Brown*, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Carlyle's Life in London*, vol. ii. p. 383.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 250.

CHAP. 1869 and 1871 had, too, its tragic sequel. Jowett used to  
XXXI. remark how curiously Ruskin's later years of illness resembled those of Swift. But one turns from likeness to unlikeness. Ruskin, for all his angry sarcasm, was never soured; the genial and kindly qualities of his nature were never killed; he never lost faith in human nature; even when most despairing, he was ready with schemes for conceivable regenerations of the world. But on this point also I have touched already.<sup>1</sup>

"In my constant natural temper," continues Ruskin, "and thoughts of things and of people, I have sympathy with Marmontel." Here the points of sympathy are easy to follow. In his *Mémoires*, Marmontel describes "the influence of natural surroundings upon his character; his close observation of nature; his strong sense of justice; his insistence upon the importance of the study of the exact meaning of words; his appreciation of the futility of mere worldly success as compared with a useful and honourable life, and his keen antipathy to religious persecution."<sup>2</sup> These are all points of obvious resemblance to Ruskin. With the author of "the exquisitely finished" *Moral Tales*,<sup>3</sup> he was in sympathy alike for their substance and for their style. In those tales of simple peasant life he found the most effective contrast to the mechanical and material conditions of the modern world. He admired Marmontel's "fine, tremulous" sayings and thoughts, "like the blossoming heads of grass in May";<sup>4</sup> the description could not be bettered for much of Ruskin's own writing.

At other times he likened himself to, or proclaimed his sympathy with, a greater man than Marmontel—with Jean Jacques Rousseau. There are points of difference, many and obvious—in character, in conduct, and in circumstance—between the two men; yet in other respects Ruskin—romanticist and reformer—may well be classed among the intellectual descendants of Rousseau. Without Rousseau, would there have been Ruskin? In describing

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 327.

<sup>3</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch.

<sup>2</sup> P. W. T. Warren, *Reader's Companion to Sesame and Lilies*, p. 25.

iii. § 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 14.

his first visit to Switzerland, he notes the blessedness of such entrance into life for a child of such a temperament as his. And then he adds: "True, the temperament belonged to the age: a very few years,—within the hundred,—before that, no child could have been born to care for mountains in that way. Till Rousseau's time there had been no 'sentimental love of nature.'" <sup>1</sup> "I know of no man whom I more entirely resemble," he wrote to his father (June 21, 1862), "than Rousseau. If I were asked whom of all men of any name in past time I thought myself to be grouped with, I should answer unhesitatingly, Rousseau. I judge by the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, the *Confessions*, the writings on Politics, and the life in the Ile St. Pierre." And similarly to his mother from Neuchâtel (May 8, 1866): "The intense resemblance between me and Rousseau, in mind, and even in many of the chances of life, increases upon my mind more or more; and as I look this morning through the bright sunshine to the lake of Bienne, or rather to the woods above it, I cannot help wondering if the end of my life is to be in seclusion or in ill-temper like his." The reference, in Rousseau's "life in the isle of St. Peter" is to the fifth of the *Réveries*, which suggests many curious points of similarity between him who sought solace on the Lake of Bienne—in converse with the peasants, in study of the sights and sounds of nature, in botanical schemes "enough to occupy me for the rest of my days"—and him whose hermitage at Mornex has been described in a previous chapter.<sup>2</sup> Lord Morley's account of the island, and translation of Rousseau's description of his life there,<sup>3</sup> might almost pass for an account of Ruskin's days at Mornex.

### III

Resemblances with many other men of note, and obligations to them, might be traced; as, with Scott in some

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. i. § 134.

<sup>2</sup> See above, chapter iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Rousseau*, ed. 1886, vol. ii. pp. 108-115.



CHAP. points of temperament and circumstances of training; with  
XXXI. Plato, in glancing irony; to George Herbert, to Hooker, and so forth. But such a theme is endless. No man of genius is quite like another; and Ruskin was essentially original. "It is long since there has been an age," said Mill, "of which it could be said, as truly as of this, that nearly all the writers, even the good ones, were but commentators: expanders and appliers of ideas borrowed from others. Among those of the present time I can think of two only (now that Carlyle has written himself out and become a mere commentator on himself) who seem to draw out what they say from a source within themselves; and to the practical doctrines and tendencies of both these, there are the gravest objections. Comte on the Continent; in England (ourselves excepted) I can think only of Ruskin."<sup>1</sup> In all the vast mass of his published writings, and Ruskin is one of the most voluminous of all English writers, and in the thousands of his known letters, there is not a page or a half-sheet of note-paper which could be mistaken for the product of any other pen. In the case of one who thus stamped himself upon his writings, the books must be a mirror of the man; but the impression which particular books or passages are likely to make is supplemented or corrected by his letters, his talk, his manner in personal intercourse.

A man who knew nothing of Ruskin except certain of his books might well conceive that he was nothing if not vain, egotistical, arrogant. He was all these, but he was much besides. His vanity, he never concealed; nor his egotism. In some senses he was, indeed, as Mr. Moncure Conway said of him, "an egoist without egoism";<sup>2</sup> by which, I take it, is meant that his egoism was combined with perfect frankness, with unselfishness, with generosity, with humour. These are all points which Ruskin's letters sufficiently illustrate. But in much of his writing he was an egotist, as Professor Raleigh defines the term.<sup>3</sup> He was not

<sup>1</sup> Mill's Diary, Jan. 21, 1854  
(*Letters of John Stuart Mill*, vol. ii.  
p. 361).

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography of M. D. Conway*,  
vol. ii. p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Six Essays on Johnson*, p. 59.

like Dr. Johnson, who "took the floor with all comers," and looked at life "from the broad standing-ground of common humanity." That is not the way with men who wrap themselves in Prophetic mantles. For all his "sympathy with Guido Guinicelli," Ruskin assuredly did not always take to heart the poet's sonnet "Of Moderation and Tolerance":—

"He is a fool who deems that none has sought  
The truth, save he alone, or knows it true."

Yet all this gives us only one side of Ruskin's nature—and the accidental side, it seems to me, rather than the essential. The testimony alike of close personal friends and of casual acquaintances is here uniform. "In personal intercourse," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "I have never known him, in full health, betrayed into a harsh word, or an ungracious phrase, or an unkind judgment, or a trace of egotism. Face to face, he was the humblest, most willing, and patient of listeners, always deferring to the judgment of others in things wherein he did not profess to be a student, and anxious only to learn."<sup>1</sup> Professor Norton, on meeting Ruskin in 1856, was at once struck by the same thing: "The tone of dogmatism and of arbitrary assertion too often manifest in his writing was entirely absent from his talk. He never quarrelled with a difference of opinion, and was apt to attribute only too much value to a judgment that did not coincide with his own. I have not a memory of those days in which I recall him except as one of the pleasantest, gentlest, kindest, and most interesting of men."<sup>2</sup> "He is very agreeable company," wrote Motley, who chanced to meet him in 1859; "very fond of talking, but not dogmatic as in his books."<sup>3</sup> "He was really," says Max Müller, a fellow Professor and an occasional attendant at Ruskin's lectures, "the most tolerant and agreeable man in society. He could discover beauty where no one else could see it,

<sup>1</sup> *John Ruskin* ("English Men of Letters"), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Ruskin to Norton*, vol. i. p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley*, vol. i. p. 332.

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and make allowance where others saw no excuse. I remember him as diffident as a young girl, full of questions and grateful for any information. Even on art topics I have watched him listening almost deferentially to others who laid down the law in his presence.”<sup>1</sup> “When pleased by any remark,” says another Oxford friend, “he would not only express approval in the usual way, but also clap his hands for joy. And this he would do even when severe, but, as he thought, just criticism was passed upon himself by younger men; as, for instance, when one of us said, ‘There is one privilege of genius of which you avail yourself to the utmost extent—self-contradiction.’ Again, when he was once laying down the law that a picture should be finished calmly from corner to corner, and it was replied, ‘That is what you never do yourself; you know that difficulties, like toads, lurk in corners’—his laughter and hand-clapping were greater even than usual.”<sup>2</sup> “He would fling out wildly at you,” says another memorial of these Oxford days—“at the music-stool you were sitting on, with its blunt, machine-turned edges; at the pictures on your walls; and then come and stand by you, and with folded hands and half-closed eyes ask you, repentantly, to lecture *him*.”<sup>3</sup> No one was more courteous to radicals, lawyers, political economists, scientific persons, and others whom he professed to abhor. In his books he allowed himself in passages, destined to stand, a freedom of contemptuous comment which his admirers must deplore. When he assumed magisterial robes omniscience became his foible; but in reality he was perfectly conscious of his own limitations and he was ever ready to sit at the feet of masters in their several subjects. His obligations, in botanical matters, to Professor Oliver are recorded in *Proserpina*, though that distinguished botanist (himself too an amateur artist) regarded Ruskin, I fear, as a quite incorrigible pupil. The correspondence which Sir Oliver Lodge has printed<sup>4</sup> with regard to the scientific causes of some phenomena of the clouds shows how ready and

<sup>1</sup> *Auld Lang Syne*, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *St. George*, vol. vi. p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Oddie in *The Pelican Record*, vol. ii. p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. viii. and ix.

eager Ruskin was to learn, how grateful for all friendly instruction. "Some people say," wrote Ruskin in one of these letters (Feb. 16, 1885), "I have good command of language, but I have none in the least strong enough to thank you for the time and care you have given me. I trust, however, I shall be able to use the knowledge you give me, in a way that will please you, and enough to show my real respect for modern science in its proper function."

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## IV

Sometimes his regrets, repugnances, animosities gained the upper hand. The conversation at Hawarden turned on Homer, on which subject at least, thought anxious onlookers, he and his host would be on neutral ground. But Mr. Gladstone fell to showing how in some record of prehistoric exchange the poet had entered into those principles of barter which modern economic science would justify. As he paused in an eloquent exposition for a response from his listener, Ruskin said in a tone of bitter regret, "And to think that the devil of political economy was alive even then!" At another time Walter Scott was uppermost, and Mr. Gladstone dropped the remark that "Sir Walter had made Scotland." Ruskin inquired as to the meaning of the phrase, and Mr. Gladstone recounted the amazing contrast between the means of communication in Scotland before Sir Walter wrote compared with the present day, mentioning the number of coaches that were now conveying masses of happy trippers up and down the Trossachs. Ruskin's face had been deepening with horror, and at last he could bear it no longer. "But, my dear sir," he broke out, "that is not making Scotland; it is unmaking it!" At Hawarden Ruskin was on his best behaviour. At Oxford he sometimes gave freer play to his acute sensitiveness. In reply to a question, "What are you lecturing upon this term?" an unwary tutor said, "Inductive Psychology." "Oh, the Devil!" shouted the Professor, immediately rushing up the stairs and violently



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sporting his oak. One of the Fellows of Corpus happened to praise some of Doré's work. Ruskin laid down his knife and fork, saying, "You have spoiled my dinner." On another occasion, when he was showing Turner's drawing of Richmond in Yorkshire, some one explained that at a certain point a railway bridge was now thrown across the river. Ruskin was heard to mutter under his breath the single word "*Damnation!*"<sup>1</sup> "I remember," says Max Müller, "once taking Emerson to lunch with Ruskin, in his rooms in Corpus. Emerson was an old friend of his, and in many ways a cognate soul. But some quite indifferent subject turned up, a heated discussion ensued, and Ruskin was so upset that he had to quit the room and leave us alone."<sup>2</sup> At other times he showed an unexpected toleration. One of the Fellows commiserated with him when, during a subsidence of the floods in the Meadows, there was an overpowering smell of decaying vegetation. "I rather like it," replied Ruskin; "it reminds me of Venice." Yet, though Ruskin was affable and agreeable, he was not in all respects made for familiar friendship, at least with men and with equals. He lived, after all, a life for the most part of intellectual solitude. The circumstances of his home at Denmark Hill accounted for this in part, as we have seen; but his relations with Rossetti show, I think, that there was something more behind. If, as Jowett said, "Ruskin never rubbed his mind against others," it was partly because he placed himself upon a pedestal. However, in private intercourse, Ruskin was for the most part intolerant only of affectation or presumption. "Ah, Mr. Ruskin," said a too eager disciple, "the first moment that I entered the gallery at Florence I saw at once what you meant when asserting the supremacy of Botticelli." "Did you?" said the Professor, "and in a moment! It took me twenty years to find out that."<sup>3</sup> And similarly to a young man who was giving a too confident opinion of a book: "How often have you read

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Oddie in the *Pelican Record*, vol. ii. p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Auld Lang Syne*, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> From a sermon by Canon Scott Holland, reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Sept. 7, 1891.

it?" "Oh, two or three times." "You can never know a book until you have read it at least twenty times." A lady, wishing to push herself under his notice, asked how long it would take any one like herself to paint a plum such as one of William Hunt's. "About eight hours a day, madam," he replied, "for forty years." "Do you think, sir," asked an ambitious young Scottish student, "that I shall ever draw as well as Turner?" "It is far more likely," replied Ruskin, "that you should be made Emperor of All the Russias. There is a new Emperor every fifteen or twenty years, on the average; and by strange hap, or fortunate cabal, anybody might be made Emperor. But there is only one Turner in five hundred years, and God decides, without any admission of auxiliary cabal, what piece of clay His soul is to be put in."<sup>1</sup> A clerical friend wrote a "Life of Christ" and sent it to Brantwood, "hoping it would do good." "I think you would have done more good," said Ruskin, "if you had written the lives of some old women in your parish." A working-man asked for a subscription towards publishing a volume of his poems. "Certainly not," was the reply; "Mr. Ruskin would set poets to work, not working-men to rhyme."

Ruskin was not persistently stalked by any Boswell, and few of his conversations have been well recorded, but his "epistolary talk," as he called it, of which many examples in various styles have been given in these volumes, fills the gap. Rossetti said that some of Ruskin's monologues were extraordinarily vivid and impassioned, and made all his written words seem feeble and uninspired by comparison. "He was one of the few Englishmen I knew," said Max Müller, "who, instead of tumbling out their sentences like so many portmanteaux, bags, rugs, and hat-boxes from an open railway train, seemed to take a real delight in building up their sentences, even in familiar conversation, so as to make each deliverance a work of art." "I never knew a man," said Dr. Harley, "use more beautiful language in ordinary conversation than Ruskin; words tripped lightly from his tongue—well-chosen words, well-arranged sentences,

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 9.

CHAP. and excellent matter.”<sup>1</sup> Snatches even of casually remembered talk give some idea of his felicity. Of somebody XXXI. he said that to hear him talking of Patmore’s poetry was “like seeing a little devil jumping upon a bed of lilies.”<sup>2</sup> He was talking at Hawarden of the graces of childhood. “The pretty leaning,” he said, “of a youngling against your knee, and bending over gracefully as a lily, with winsome love, is rarely caught by artists; it is so fine and exquisite a movement as generally to be passed over. He only knew one artist who had truly found it—Vandyke.”<sup>3</sup>

He had a quizzing way with him at times which solemn people did not always understand. Grant-Duff in his “Notes from a Diary” tells a story, on the authority of Sir George Trevelyan, that being met by a friend with the remark “Plevna has fallen,” Ruskin said, “Plevna? I never heard of it; I know of nothing later than the fourteenth century.” Sir George, who knew Ruskin, would of course have understood; but the diarist cites the tale to prove Ruskin’s aloofness. In fact, he followed the Eastern crisis, as later the expedition of General Gordon, closely. But there is a similar story to the effect that being accosted by somebody with a remark upon Gordon and the Soudan, Ruskin replied, “And *who* is the Soudan?” The possibility that he was playfully ridding himself of a bore escaped the narrator. Mr. Wedderburn remembers an occasion when a bore came to luncheon at Brantwood and did all the talking. He gave a long account of *Animal Intelligence*, and of what Romanes therein says about ants. Ruskin got a chance, in a brief pause. “And does Romanes tell us,” he said, “what ants mean by touching heads as they pass each other?” “Oh yes, that’s their way of talking.” “I like that,” said Ruskin quietly—“touching heads instead of talking.” Mr. Wedderburn said to Ruskin afterwards that this was a rare instance of his use of repartee. Ruskin agreed. His answers, for the most part—and, as he said on another

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of a London Physician*, by Mrs. Alec Tweedie, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoir and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, vol. i. p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> “Extracts from an Old Journal” in *Letters of Ruskin to M. G.*

occasion to Mr. Wedderburn, his jests—had a solid meaning in them. CHAP.  
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On familiar occasions Ruskin was often whimsical, paradoxical, incalculable. There was always a flash of irony playing about his talk, which puzzled, teased, or delighted his audience according to their temperament. He liked, we are told by one of his colleagues at Corpus, to start some extreme or paradoxical opinion in Common Room. "He would then playfully defend himself, with all kinds of unexpected sallies and turns, against the united attack of those present. It was a kind of intellectual bear-baiting, especially enjoyed by the bear, as the fox is said to enjoy being hunted. When entirely surrounded or cornered, and shown how grossly self-contradictory, at the very least, was the position he had assumed, he would acknowledge his defeat, and let us into the secret of the game by a great burst of merriment." Canon Scott Holland has recorded Mr. Gladstone's look of puzzled earnestness as Ruskin expounded, over the breakfast table in Downing Street, a scheme he had for enforcing our social responsibility for crime:—

"We all of us were guilty of the crimes done in our neighbourhood. Why had we not sustained a higher moral tone which would make men ashamed to commit crime when we are near? Why had we allowed the conditions which lead to crime? We ought to feel every crime as our own. How good then would it be if London were cut up into districts, and when a murder was committed in any one district the inhabitants should draw lots to decide who should be hung for it. Would not that quicken the public conscience? How excellent the moral effect would be if the man on whom the lot fell were of peculiarly high character! Mr. Ruskin felt sure there would be no more murders in that district for some time. He conceived that even the murderer himself would be profoundly moved as he silently witnessed the execution of this innocent and excellent gentleman, and would make a resolution as he walked away that he would abstain from such deeds in future."

What, asks Canon Holland, was Mr. Gladstone to say to



CHAP. this? Was he to confute it, or show the difficulties of its  
XXXI. practical working? What Mr. Gladstone did say may be gathered from a passage in which Ruskin contrasts the conversational manners of the three Prime Ministers with whom he came occasionally in friendly collision:—

“Lord Palmerston disputed no principle with me (being, I fancied, partly of the same mind with me about principles,) but only feasibilities; whereas in every talk permitted me more recently by Mr. Gladstone, *he* disputes *all* the principles before their application; and the application of all that get past the dispute. D’Israeli differed from both in making a jest alike of principle and practice.”<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin was not unprejudiced, however, about Disraeli; for on the only occasion of his meeting that Minister—the occasion of a ceremonious dinner at the Deanery of Christ Church to have the honour of meeting the then Princess of Wales—Disraeli chaffed him publicly on his interest in the Dean’s charming daughter. The story is told inimitably in *Præterita*.

Persons wholly devoid of humour misunderstood alike his talk and his writings; and this unhappy class included, I fear, some of the Master’s most devoted disciples. I have heard a story of a disciple who, pondering in his mind the Master’s diatribes against railways, came to the conclusion that even to send a letter by the post was to parley with the Evil One. He spent accordingly a large part of an innocent life in tramping about the country delivering letters in person to his friends. At last he reached Brantwood. He departed thence a sadder, but not, I fear, a wiser man; for when Ruskin gently told him that he was a fool, and pointed to his own practice, which was to abuse railways, but meanwhile to use them,<sup>2</sup> the disciple’s comment was that “it was grievous to discover that the Master himself was no true Ruskinian.” Happily no follower of Ruskin is required to swear by every word of the Master; their service is free. “The only doctrine or system peculiar to me,” he

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 49.

wrote, "is the abhorrence of all that is doctrinal instead of demonstrable, and of all that is systematic instead of useful; so that *no true* disciple of mine will ever be a 'Ruskinian'!—he will follow not me, but the instincts of his own soul, and the guidance of its Creator."<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin was in his books a preacher. In one of his earlier essays he deploras that the assumptions of the clergy caused the "Ministerial duty of the laity" to be neglected. "There is not a moment of a man's active life in which he may not be indirectly preaching, and throughout a great part of his life he ought to be directly preaching, and teaching both stranger and friend."<sup>2</sup> He certainly practised as he thus preached. But he was also full of humour, of gaiety, of fun. A friendship of his later years may be mentioned as illustrating this side of Ruskin—a friendship with a painter who, as such, had little in common with his other artist-friends—the late H. Stacy Marks, R.A. "I have often wondered," wrote Marks with characteristic modesty, "how so firm and fast a friendship came to exist between a man of such wide and varied learning, such great intellect, and myself."<sup>3</sup> And there are sides of Ruskin's character, pursuits, and tastes which seem to have little in common with the jovial painter, known to all his friends as "Marco." Yet the letters show that the two men were on terms of warm friendship, and in one of them Ruskin says that among all his friends there was none with whom he had so complete sympathy. They had first met, as already related, in 1856 in connexion with a skit which Marks had written on Ruskin's *Academy Notes*.<sup>4</sup> The acquaintance was resumed twenty years later, when Marks was arranging an exhibition of the works of his friend Frederick Walker, A.R.A. Ruskin sent Marks a letter for publication on that occasion; they met again, and presently became fast friends. The modest, sincere, and, within its range, accomplished work of Marks won the approbation of the critic; his genial humour attracted the sympathy of the man. They were

<sup>1</sup> *St. Mark's Rest*, § 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Notes on the Construction of* p. 169.  
*Sheepfolds* (1851), § 16.

<sup>4</sup> See Vol. I. p. 406.

CHAP. alike in their love of old times, and of animals, and soon  
XXXI. became on the footing of old friends. Like every one else who came in friendly contact with Ruskin, Marks found him unaffected and courteous. "However heterodox some of my opinions on art may have seemed to him, he never showed the least irritation," says Marks, "but would smilingly put me right with a phrase, half joke, half earnest."<sup>1</sup> The words fit more than one of the letters. Marks was full of quips and an excellent mimic, and he found Ruskin "the best and most easily amused man it was ever my lot to play the fool before." One of his performances was a musical and pantomimic rendering of H. S. Leigh's song "Uncle John" ("I never loved a dear gazelle"); this was a favourite diversion, and Ruskin became "Uncle John" to Marks and his family—some of the letters are so signed. The merry evenings with Marks were much enjoyed by Ruskin; a day they spent together at the Zoological Gardens seems to have been less successful. Ruskin complained that the birds were always moulting, and the snakes always shedding their coats, and he wanted to know the mechanism of a bird's flight, and the superintendent couldn't tell him.

## V

Of Ruskin's tenderness—a quality discernible enough in some, though not of all, his writings—enough has been shown in the course of this biography; but a typical letter, written to a friend on the loss of his wife, may be added:—

(To GEORGE RICHMOND.) "BRANTWOOD, 11th Jan., 1881.—MY DEAR FRIEND,—I would fain have written before now—but had no words in my tongue, no strength in my heart. I have not myself since my mother's death (except one which was rather death to myself than to another) sustained so intimate and irreparable—may I say to *me*, also, domestic loss?—and my personal sorrow is haggard with terror for the future to you, and a cruel

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<sup>1</sup> *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, vol. ii. p. 166.

sense of the departure of all things that you loved in this the Head of them—and I do not know how far you will be able, in the knowledge of your own dearness to your children and your friends, to take from them what they may yet be able to give you of twilight gladness, and peace in waiting for the day of Restoration—of all things—and of her. Men say the time is near—a day is near, at least, of such trial of the spirits of all flesh as may well be called one of Judgment. I thank God that I am able still—with you—to be among those that Watch for the Morning—and still able to be thankful beside the places of rest of those whom I have loved, to whom Christ has said, ‘Arise, thou, my fair one—and come away.’—Ever your loving . . .”

The tender charm of Ruskin’s manner in private intercourse is well illustrated by his relations with Carlyle. “No one managed Carlyle so well as Ruskin,” said Mrs. Carlyle; “it was quite beautiful to see him. Carlyle would say outrageous things, running counter to all Ruskin valued and cared for. Ruskin would treat Mr. Carlyle like a naughty child, lay his arms round him, and say, ‘Now, this is too bad!’”<sup>1</sup> Of young girls Ruskin was the devoted slave. But to all his friends, young or old, boy or maid, humble or distinguished, his manner had something of the same caressing charm. With all this there may have been, as some who knew him thought, an element of weakness. Against the further charge of effeminacy he protested:

“Because I have passed my life in almsgiving, not in fortune-hunting; because I have laboured always for the honour of others, not my own, and have chosen rather to make men look to Turner and Luini, than to form or exhibit the skill of my own hand; because I have lowered my rents, and assured the comfortable lives of my poor tenants, instead of taking from them all I could force for the roofs they needed; because I love a wood walk better than a London street, and would rather watch a seagull fly, than shoot it, and rather hear a thrush sing, than eat it; finally, because I never disobeyed my mother, because I have honoured all women with

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<sup>1</sup> *Anne Gilchrist: her Life and Writings*, p. 82.



CHAP. solemn worship, and have been kind even to the unthankful and  
XXXI. the evil; therefore the hacks of English art and literature wag their heads at me, and the poor wretch who pawns the dirty linen of his soul daily for a bottle of sour wine and a cigar, talks of the 'effeminate sentimentality of Ruskin.'"<sup>1</sup>

A noble defence! a stinging retort! Yet Carlyle, too, thought Ruskin "unhappily not a strong man; a weak man rather"; he "aimed as if at the very stars," but was "sensitive" and "flighty" withal. And Ruskin himself proclaimed the weak sides of his character. He was, he said, "an impetuous, inconsiderate, weakly communicative person."<sup>2</sup> He was "bred in luxury, which I perceive to have been unjust to others, and destructive to myself; vacillating, foolish, and miserably failing in all my own conduct in life—and blown about hopelessly by storms of passion—a man clothed in soft raiment,—I, a reed shaken with the wind. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Which things also are true; yet not the whole truth, and it is not on the note of weakness that this sketch of some of Ruskin's characteristics shall close. Rather is it the courage, the strength, the consistency of Ruskin's life that impress me, as I look back over these volumes.

## VI

"Carlyle's letters," wrote Ruskin to Norton (March 10, 1883), "like all the words of him published since his death, have vexed me, and partly angered, with their perpetual 'me miserum'—never seeming to feel the extreme ill manners of this perpetual whine; and, to what one dares not call an affected, but a quite unconsciously false extent, hiding the more or less of pleasure which a strong man must have in using his strength, be it but in heaving aside dust-heaps." And again (Oct. 7, '84), "It's no use always saying 'Ay de mi!' like Carlyle. I'm really ashamed of

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 41.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 51.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 58.

him in those letters to Emerson. My own diaries are indeed full of mewling and moaning, all to myself, but I think my letters to friends have more a tendency to crowing, or, at least, on the whole try to be pleasant." Carlyle and Ruskin had, it seems, a consciousness of each other's shortcomings. Ruskin in his diaries does mew and moan, but at least as often he rejoices and resolves. And he lived his life on the more manly note. He was industrious, prodigal, indefatigable. The volume of his literary work was immense; and that of his drawing is enough to give a respectable account of a life by itself. And much of this work was done in spite of much ill-health, sorrow, and recurrent disablements. Strength of physical constitution there must have been, to carry him into old age past so many debilitating attacks; but he had also an indomitable spirit. And his life was consistent in its very diversity. Two sides of his nature, as I have often shown, were constantly at variance, but alike in thought and in life he united the Hebraistic and the Hellenistic ideal. To him, as to William Morris, art was life, and beauty a call to action. He was possessed of an ample fortune and was gifted with exquisite sensibilities. He loved peace and yearned for it; yet disdained to take it till superior force compelled; and then, by irony of fate, was no longer competent to enjoy it. He spent himself lavishly for others—himself, his powers, his peace, and not only his money and his treasures. He did not, indeed, like St. Francis or Tolstoi, make the complete surrender. His compromises were not wholly self-indulgent; they were governed in part by consideration of others. But "there is yet something wrong," he wrote; "I have no peace, still less ecstasy."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the coat of camel's-hair is necessary for that, and he did not like camel's-hair. "I'm reading history of early saints for my Amiens book," he wrote to Miss Beever, "and feel that I ought to be scratched or starved, or boiled, or something unpleasantest." He used to "reproach himself that he had not the courage to live in a garret or make shoes like

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 44.

CHAP. Tolstoi.”<sup>1</sup> Possibly his Guild might have prospered none  
XXXI. the better, if he had; and as it was, he still set a noble  
example. “For the sake of others who have not known  
him as I have known him, I would declare my conviction,” wrote Professor Norton, “that no other master of  
literature in our time has more earnestly and steadily  
endeavoured to set forth for the help of those whom he  
addressed whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure,  
and lovely; or in his own life has more faithfully tried to  
practise the virtues which spring from the contemplation of  
these things and their adoption as the rule of conduct.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Meynell, *John Ruskin*, “Brantwood Edition” (1891) of  
p. 272. *Time and Tide*.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to the American

## CHAPTER XXXII

### INFLUENCE

“Life without industry is guilt, and industry without art is brutality”—Oxford *Lectures on Art*.

WHAT has been, what is, and what is likely to be the influence of the life and the work which have been described in these volumes? The influence of Ruskin's various books at the time when they severally appeared has been noted in due course of my story; but at the close of it some general survey may be attempted.

#### I

The first volume showed Ruskin as mainly engaged upon the work of art-criticism. No one, I imagine, will dispute that of all writers upon art in the English language, Ruskin has been the most influential. He has been the most read; among other reasons because he is one of the few writers on the subject who are readable. And he has been the most read among the people who counted for most in their generation. He inspired artists. He formed public taste. To take only some of the greater names: Leighton, Millais, Holman Hunt, Burne-Jones, and William Morris have all recorded the debt which they owed at one time or another to the author of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones*. He interpreted Turner; he introduced the “Primitives”; he defended the Pre-Raphaelites; he inspired much of the Gothic Revival. The larger number of educated persons during at least two generations saw pictures, architecture, scenery with eyes directed and enlarged by Ruskin. The art-literature of those generations was largely founded upon him and borrowed from him.



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Bibliography is the surest basis of historical criticism in literature; though because it is humble and laborious, its aid is often neglected. And if any one will turn over the leaves of the bibliography of "Ruskiniana," as I have summarised and presented it in the Library Edition, he will perceive at a glance how immense has been the volume of Ruskin's influence.<sup>1</sup>

But is the force now spent? There are many who are quite confident that it is. Some with loud disdain assert, and others only dare with whispered apology to deny, that Ruskin's writings on art and nature no longer count. Sometimes the particulars given in support of the proposition lack knowledge. For instance, an eminent Professor wrote not long ago that Ruskin in his art-criticism "practically ignores Velazquez" —Velazquez, of whom Ruskin said that he shows "the highest reach of technical perfection yet attained in art, all effort and labour seeming to cease in the radiant peace and simplicity of consummate human power"; Velazquez, an example of whose work was among the four "Lesson Photographs" which Ruskin proposed to place in every college and school of "St. George." But this is a detail. I have quoted before the general saying, "We have got past Ruskin and Morris now":<sup>3</sup>—

"Thundering and bursting  
In torrents, in waves—  
Carolling and shouting  
Over tombs, amid graves—  
See! on the cumber'd plain  
Clearing a stage,  
Scattering the past about,  
Comes the new age!"

<sup>1</sup> American readers may also be referred to *A Bibliographical Contribution to the Study of Ruskin*, by M. Ethel Jameson (Cambridge, Riverside Press, 1901). Though not free from mistakes, this book is especially full in record of American editions and American Ruskiniana. The pioneer in the bibliography of

Ruskin was the late R. H. Shepherd (1878). To the admirable *Bibliography* by Mr. T. J. Wise and Mr. J. P. Smart (1893) every student of Ruskin must feel deeply indebted.

<sup>2</sup> The late Professor York Powell, *St. George*, vol. iii. p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. I. p. 148.

Well, it may be that the "beautiful souls" are right; and at any rate it were idle to argue about posterity. If Ruskin's writings on art or on other things have had their day and soon will cease to be, their very death may yet fulfil the service of their life. "Our mental work," he wrote, "so far as it was only good *thought*—good for its time, and apparently a great achievement therein—that good, useful thought may yet in the future become a foolish thought, and then die quite away,—it, and the memory of it,—when better thought and knowledge come. But the better thought could not have come if the weaker thought had not come first, and died in sustaining the better. If we think honestly, our thoughts will not only live usefully, but even perish usefully—like the moss—and become dark,—not without due service." <sup>1</sup>

Yet here again, the humble bibliographer has a word to say. He need not presume to be confident, but he may mention a fact which seems to suggest a caution to the critics of the New Age. The very period which is said to mark the eclipse of Ruskin's authority as a writer upon art and nature has been the period which has witnessed the greatest extension of the vogue of his books on those subjects. I will not dwell upon the great flood of cheap reprints in the English language, which during recent years have made Ruskin an author for the many, instead of an author only for the few. This, it may be said, is merely a case of the vulgar entering upon a field which superior persons have abandoned. But there is another feature in the Bibliography of Ruskin which is significant. Since the days when he laid down his pen, he has ceased to be only an English author, and has become a world-author. Many of his books, and especially his books upon art, have been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Hungarian. I am not aware that Ruskin has been translated into Russian, but Tolstoi's appreciation of him is well known. He regarded Ruskin as the greatest Englishman of his time. Ruskin's writings have been the subject also of essays or treatises in Belgium, in Holland, in

<sup>1</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. i. chap. i.

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Denmark, in Switzerland. And the foreign vogue of Ruskin has been greatest in the countries where æsthetic criticism is pursued with the greatest ardour. In Germany, Herr Engel may have set the fashion, for in his *History of English Literature* (1897) he commended Ruskin to German readers as "the Englishman's Winckelmann and Lessing in one." Ruskin has become a favourite theme for University dissertations in Germany; elaborate commentaries have been devoted to him; and on the occasion of his death, and in years immediately following it, his life and work attracted notice in German periodicals hardly less widespread than in England itself. "In the last twenty years," said Professor Sieper in a recent lecture in London, "Ruskin and Morris more than any other Englishmen have influenced German thought."<sup>1</sup> In France it is much the same, and nowhere has Ruskin found more sympathetic or discerning criticism than is to be found in the abundant series of "studies" which have appeared in Paris during recent years.

But here, too, the bibliographical fact will perhaps be waived aside. The foreigner, so simple, so behind the Englishman, is only now discovering (it may be said) a writer whom we in our superior and quicker wisdom have by this time learnt to discard. The point has been touched with delicate wit by a French writer, in replying to such critics: "I understood them perfectly: some of them seemed to say, 'What, you are so far behind the times that you can still take pleasure in these sermons on pictures? Do you not know that Ruskin is quite out of date?' The English smiled at our enthusiasm, somewhat as a little girl may smile when she sees a younger companion content still to play with her doll."<sup>2</sup> Such critics suppose that Ruskin owes his vogue as an art-writer in France to sermonizing which is sometimes out of place, to phases of criticism which are now out of date, to preferences or prejudices which were always out of proportion. They are quite mistaken, as any one may discover who turns to

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Aug. 13, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> M. de la Sizeranne, in the *Magazine of Art*, April 1900. I am

indebted to this suggestive paper for some other points in the present chapter.



the pages of M. Brunetière, M. Cherfils, M. Chevrillon, or M. de la Sizeranne. When, again, M. Bardoux refers students of architecture to Ruskin's books, it is not chiefly for the sake of their sermons in stones;<sup>1</sup> and when a French painter, M. Paul Signac, says that "every artist should know Ruskin's *Elements of Drawing* by heart,"<sup>2</sup> it is not of its occasional moralities that he is thinking. Ruskin owes his vogue in foreign countries to other things—the nicety of his observation, the delicacy of his artistic perceptions, the suggestiveness of his technical criticisms, his firm grasp of a few leading and governing ideas.

## II

A technical point or two may first be instanced. I have said something earlier in this book about the supposed inconsistency in Ruskin's admiration alike of the Pre-Raphaelites and of Turner, and have given his own harmony of conclusions.<sup>3</sup> His method of writing and his temperament are themselves in part responsible for many misunderstandings. He seldom qualified his statements. He wrote at white heat. His thought was comprehensive, but at a given moment, when engaged on a particular point, he did not always see things steadily and see them whole. Yet I have shown that his doctrine of realism is not essentially inconsistent with his doctrine of impressionism; and, curiously, French writers cite him as a witness, and an inspiration, on the side of the neo-impressionist school. His principle, laid down in the *Elements of Drawing* and elsewhere, upon the division of colour is the point upon which they fasten in this connexion.<sup>4</sup> How far Ruskin's

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 239 n.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue Blanche*, July 1, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. I. pp. 288, 338 seq.

<sup>4</sup> See the articles in the *Revue Blanche* (May 1, May 15, and July 1, 1898) by M. Paul Signac, and especially the third article ("L'Éducation de l'Oeil"), pp. 358–361, in which he cites "le témoig-

nage de Sir John Ruskin, le didactique esthéticien, le critique adepte et prescient." The principal passages cited by M. Signac are in the *Elements of Drawing*, §§ 168–173. See also an article by M. de la Sizeranne in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 1897, p. 194.



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XXXII. school, need not be discussed here; the point is that painters and writers of the most "advanced" ideas find his books suggestive and inspiring. It is, of course, necessary to such discovery to read the books themselves and not to be fobbed off by misleading extracts or second-hand misrepresentations.

This instance leads to the more general points. The true secret of Ruskin's influence, the real reason why his work will, if it do, survive, is this: that his books are stimulating and suggestive, because they were the expression, by a master in the art of language, of a mind which was extraordinarily rich and acute, and which had grasped some great and abiding principles. The methods of the studios change, and the fashions of criticism with them; but there is that in Ruskin's books which is independent of them, and which may survive the whims, prejudices, and exaggerations of Ruskin himself. If his influence should be an abiding one, it will be less for any information that he imparts, than for the thought that he suggests, and the sources of pleasure that he communicates. The criticism current at the present day is largely intellectual and scientific. It searches archives, measures ears and toes, traces influences, connects or disconnects schools. And this is all excellent work, but is it quite certain that such criticism has rendered the more emotional method of Ruskin out of date for all time? Certainly he was often wrong according to present lights in his attribution of particular works to particular names. He was confused about Memmi and Baldini, and I doubt if he had ever so much as heard of Amico di Sandro. But what he did was to bring to the study of particular works or particular artists the attraction of joy, of fervour, of life. He possessed, as a reviewer has recently said, in far larger measure than any other art critic, "a consciousness of the immense stores of human interest inherent in his subject. Thus he will frequently describe a picture or piece of sculpture from, as one cannot but now feel, an altogether distorted standpoint, a standpoint which inextricably confuses ethics and æsthetics

and interchanges the valuations of both to their mutual discomfiture. But none the less his realisation of the significance of art as a human language, his instinctive perception of the aspirations and passions which pour themselves forth in that medium, render his analysis twenty times more valuable because twenty times more stimulating than that of many a much more accurate as well as more highly trained critic. The mission of such writers seems to be less to inform than to excite interest. They do not discriminate, they do not separate the wheat from the tares. But they fertilise; they are like the sun which shines on the just and unjust, or the showers which nourish weeds as well as crops. They make things grow."<sup>1</sup> This is the function which Ruskin himself assigned to his work. He covered an immense range. His industry was colossal, but it was exceeded by his curiosity, his schemes, his attempts. The point is illustrated not only in the main course of this Biography, but in many of Ruskin's letters of humorous irony.<sup>2</sup> Of course he made mistakes. "It is strange," he wrote to Professor Norton, "that I hardly ever get anything stated without some grave mistake, however true in my main discoveries." Nay, not strange; but inevitable, as he himself well knew. It was not altogether in irony that, in printing some specimens of his hand-writing, he said: "It would be difficult to give more distinct evidence than is furnished by these pieces of manuscript, of the incurably desultory character which has brought on me the curse of Reuben, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.' But I reflect, hereupon, with resolute self-complacency, that water, when good, is a good thing, though it be not stable; and that it may be better sometimes to irrigate than excel."<sup>3</sup>

Ruskin's influence has been fruitful and irrigating because it sprung from some great principles. I shall try very briefly to define three of them. The first was that of truth and sincerity in art (as in all things), and especially in the art

<sup>1</sup> An article on "Greek Thought and Modern Life" in the *Quarterly Review*, July 1910.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the letter to Mrs. Carlyle at Vol. I. p. 484.

<sup>3</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 51.

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to which he devoted most of his attention—the art which portrays the aspects of external nature, and records the impressions felt in its presence. *Modern Painters* is not, I think, in point of literary form the best of Ruskin's books on art; but it is rightly regarded as his principal work, because it contains most of his essential message. He delivered in it a mighty stroke at all that is conventional, stereotyped, untrue, insincere. And in it, as in his later books on flowers and stones, he himself depicted the infinite variety, complexity, richness of natural beauty. This is the true sense in which he was a "word-painter"; but, as I have said in an earlier chapter,<sup>1</sup> he painted in his words, as he exhorted the artists to paint in their lines and colours, with his eye on the object and with his heart in it. Ruskin in one of his lectures placed Turner by the side of Bacon;<sup>2</sup> the artist who unsealed the *aspect* of nature by the side of the philosopher who unsealed her *principles*. Is it too much to say that among the writers of the nineteenth century Ruskin's place may be beside Darwin?<sup>3</sup> However that may be, Ruskin's influence consisted largely in this, that he gave, and still gives, to his readers eyes to see beauties in nature,—in the simplest as well as in the grandest of her phenomena—and to read the laws of her aspects. And the pleasure in these things does not pass away, or become out of date. Indeed if Ruskin be right, the fulness of the time is yet to come:—

"It seems to me that the simplest and most necessary truths are always the last believed. All real and wholesome enjoyments possible to man have been just as possible to him, since first he was made on the earth, as they are now; and they are possible to him chiefly in peace. To watch the corn grow, and the blossoms set; to draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade; to read, to think, to love, to hope, to pray—these are the things that make man happy. . . . And I am Utopian and enthusiastic enough to believe that the time will come when the world will discover this. It has

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, § 101.

<sup>3</sup> The comparison was worked out by an able writer in the *Pilot*, Nov. 23, 1903.



now made its experiments in every possible direction but the right one: and it seems that it must, at last, try the right one, in a mathematical necessity. It has tried fighting, and preaching, and fasting, buying and selling, pomp and parsimony, pride and humiliation,—every possible manner of existence in which it could conjecture there was any happiness or dignity: and all the while, as it bought, sold, and fought, and fasted, and wearied itself with policies, and ambitions, and self-denials, God had placed its real happiness in the keeping of the little mosses of the wayside, and of the clouds of the firmament. Now and then a wearied king, or a tormented slave, found out where the true kingdoms of the world were, and possessed himself, in a furrow or two of garden ground, of a truly infinite dominion.”<sup>1</sup>

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Next, Ruskin had a firm grasp of the great principle of the unity of art, and was insistent in preaching it. The dignity of decorative art; the essential connexion between arts and crafts; the degradation and the servitude involved in too much subdivision of labour in art; these are the themes upon which Ruskin wrote in many a burning page of *The Seven Lamps*, of *the Stones of Venice*, of *the Two Paths*, of *Ariadne Florentina*. And this is another of the reasons why in France, where this modern movement is so strong, so much attention is now paid to the art-writings of Ruskin. In our own country the movement is connected with another name as well; but “it would be ungracious indeed for me,” said Morris, “who have been so much taught by him that I cannot help feeling continually as I speak that I am echoing his words, to leave out the name of John Ruskin from an account of what has happened since the tide began to turn.”<sup>2</sup>

And Ruskin had hold of a third great principle, of yet wider sweep; but in order to place this in true relation to his life and influence, I must turn for a page or two to subjects apparently remote.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art*, 1881, p. 84.



## III

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This second volume has shown Ruskin mainly in the character not of art-critic but of political economist and social reformer. His influence in these fields hardly needs any evidence from Bibliography (though much, if necessary, could be supplied) to illustrate it. The influence is written large in the political thought and practice of the time. I have dealt already with his criticism of the political economy current in his time, and have pointed out that the specific heresies involved in that criticism have passed into statute-book and parliamentary discussion. I have discussed also his Guild of St. George, and his contributions to educational reforms.<sup>1</sup> More generally, it may here be noticed with how many of the movements of political opinion Ruskin's writings have a direct relation. To an inquirer of to-day contrasting the central tendencies of political thought with those which were most powerful in the middle of the nineteenth century, these three large differences, among others, will, I suppose, present themselves. (1) The thoughts and efforts of reformers are now devoted more to social than to purely political questions. (2) The doctrine of *laissez faire*, alike in politics and in economics, has lost much of its former hold. Reformers of to-day look rather to co-operation organised by the State, than to the free play of competition, for the improvement of the people. (3) The limits of State interference have thus been largely extended. Not freedom from external restraint, but free scope for self-development, is the ideal of modern reformers. Positive, and no longer negative, freedom is the aim. Every one of these three principles belongs to the essence of Ruskin's social and political philosophy. And in some, too, of his practical suggestions, besides those mentioned in connexion with his political economy, he has turned out to be a pioneer. Thus in the earlier volumes of *Fors Clavigera* (1871-1874), he insisted strongly on the necessity for Fair Rents, Fixity of Tenure, and Compensation for Improvements. He gave the landlords until 1880 to set their houses

<sup>1</sup> Chapters VIII., XIX.

in order. In that year, he predicted, the landlords of the country would be "confronted not with a Chartist meeting at Kennington, but a magna and maxima Chartist Ecclesia at Westminster"—wherein, he said, they would "find a difference and to purpose."<sup>1</sup> The difference was the Land Act of 1881. The reforms he advocated began, of course, with Ireland—the *corpus vile* on which we make so many of our political experiments, good, bad, and indifferent. The principles of the Irish Land Act may never be applied in Great Britain; though, with his eye upon Crofters' Courts in Scotland and Land Commissions in Wales, a prudent man would perhaps not prophesy very confidently. But if such Government action is averted in England, will it not be because English landlords have taken to heart such exhortations as Ruskin delivered? With regard to another phase of the question, Ruskin was not a land nationaliser. He was a strong advocate of private tenure. But "property," he says, "belongs to whom proper."<sup>2</sup> "The land to those who can use it;" "by whomsoever held to be made the most of." "The right action of a State respecting its land is to secure it in various portions to those of its citizens who deserve to be trusted with it, according to their respective desires and proved capacities."<sup>3</sup> These typical extracts from writings of thirty or forty years ago are specially interesting in connexion with debates on Bills and Acts of recent sessions, under which it is sought to invest local bodies with compulsory powers of purchasing and hiring land, in order to dole it out "to those who can use it." Difference of opinion is hardly professed any longer on the principle involved. The point on which discussion turns is with regard to the amount which any one man would, could, or should want, and to the conditions under which he would be likely to make the most of it. Both parties agree in giving access to the land to the citizens, precisely as Ruskin says, "according to their respective desires and proved capacities." We have, however, as yet hardly grasped another of Ruskin's conceptions on the Land Question—the

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 45.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter 70.<sup>3</sup> *Time and Tide*, § 151.

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conception of beautiful landscape as one of the most essential elements of national wealth. But all such movements as those for the preservation of commons, the protection of footpaths, the limitation of rural advertisements, the consecration of land to a National Trust, and access to mountains are steps towards satisfying a new economic want which the author of *Modern Painters* did more perhaps than any other one man in our time to create. There is much, too, in the famous Budget of 1909 which is in harmony with Ruskin's ideas, though he might have had something pungent to say in criticism of a theory that land is necessarily "undeveloped" unless it be covered at the earliest possible moment with the greatest possible number of suburban villas. Turning from the country to the towns, I may cite a passage which Ruskin wrote in 1883 when the "bitter cry of Outcast London" was heard in the land, and "slumming" became a recognised occupation:—

"I beg the readers alike, and the despisers, of my former pleadings in this matter, to observe that all the recent agitation of the public mind concerning the dwellings of the poor, is merely the sudden and febrile (Heaven be thanked, though, for such fever!) recognition of the things which I have been these twenty years trying to get recognized, and reiterating description and lamentation of—even to the actual printing of my pages blood-red—to try if I could catch the eye at least, when I could not the ear or the heart." <sup>1</sup>

The reference is to some passages in *Sesame and Lilies* describing the dwellings of the poor, which Ruskin had printed in red ink.<sup>2</sup> But, as we have already heard, he did not confine himself to description and lamentation. It was he who had the good fortune of giving Miss Octavia Hill the opportunities for her work as a social pioneer<sup>3</sup>—work which by its example and suggestion has done so much to promote the ideas of personal responsibility, and of personal service, to the poor.

Of course, neither in the case of Ruskin's practical

<sup>1</sup> *Fors*, Letter 93.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 119.



suggestions nor in that of his economic theories, are any patent rights or any exclusive credit to be claimed for him. He himself never made such claims. He was only a disciple, he said, of his "master" Carlyle; he was "not a discoverer," he was only a learner from Plato and Xenophon. And in an old and complex society, the growth of new ideas and the operation of fresh motive-forces require the combined efforts, from many different directions, of many thinkers and many workers. Before the fruit ripens upon the tree much digging and ditching is necessary; and the procession of time and seasons be fulfilled. "Man's fruit of justice ripens slow." Law follows public opinion; but who form public opinion? Sometimes, though less often than they may suppose, the politicians and the statesmen. To a greater, though to a more latent, extent, the thinkers and the writers. Ruskin's books have been among the moving forces; and, whether acknowledged or not, his influence has done a good deal to mould the current ideas and feelings of the time. And so, since political practice and economic theory act and react upon one another, it is not surprising to find on the one hand an economist declaring that "though the future Political Economy may not build from him directly, yet it will be rather with Ruskin's earth than Ricardo's straw that its bricks for building will be made;"<sup>1</sup> and, on the other side, a distinguished publicist recording his opinion that *Unto this Last* is "not only the most original and creative work of John Ruskin, but the most original and creative work in pure literature since *Sartor Resartus*." "It put into a form more picturesque and incisive than ever before the revolt from that cynical pedantry into which the so-called Political Economy was tending to degenerate. The brutal, ignorant, and inhuman language which was current about capital and labour, workmen, and trades-unions is heard no longer. The old plutocracy is a thing of the past. And no man has done more to expose it than the author of *Unto this Last*."<sup>2</sup> Whether we are already thus in a new era, in which all things old

<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin as a Political Economist," in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Boston, vol. ii. p. 445.

<sup>2</sup> Frederic Harrison in his *Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill, and other Literary Estimates*, pp. 74, 101.



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and bad are put away, may perhaps be doubted; but events that are passing as I write (August 1911) suggest that Ruskin's teaching may yet find further scope for influence in that better organisation of industry for which he pleaded. Amongst his unused manuscripts at Brantwood I found this passage, intended, as would appear, for an Epilogue to *Fors Clavigera* :—

“Putting aside, however, the expressions of trust in the immediate realisation of my objects, there is no statement of principle throughout the book which I am the least inclined to qualify. Far the contrary; it appears to me that the state of society is rapidly drawing to a crisis in which all that *Fors* proclaims false will be found fatally so, and in which, of pure necessity, some respectful experiment will be made on the lines it has pointed out. More especially this seems to me probable with respect to the primary need of the organisation of labour, pleaded for by me in *Unto this Last*, and variously insisted upon through all my other books. As I grow older, and have further experience of and insight into life, nothing impresses me so much as the useless affliction of its anxieties and uncertainties, in that no one, ordinarily, is *sure* of daily bread, or safe and calm in their daily toil. And I am every day more vexed at the loss of benevolent effort in contest with narrow forms of vice or distress, when it ought all to be concentrated into the order and discipline of totally governing power.”

#### IV

Such, then, are the directions in which the influence of Ruskin's writings—æsthetic and economic—may be traced. Of his influence as a moralist, as a preacher of spirituality in a materialistic age, it were needless and unprofitable to speak; needless, because the fact of such influence is hardly disputable; and unprofitable, because the extent of it admits of no precise measurement. One remark, however, in the character again of Bibliographer, I will make. Ruskin had a great dislike of the cutting up of his books into elegant extracts and mincemeat; but they have lent themselves abundantly to such treatment. No writer of the time,

I imagine, has furnished forth a greater number of volumes—in this country, in America, and on the Continent—of Gems, Pearls, Calendars, Treasuries, and the like.<sup>1</sup> For in none are to be found a greater number of “bright fancies, satisfied memories, faithful sayings, precious and restful thoughts.”<sup>2</sup>

I have, so far, in this chapter treated the æsthetic and the economic sides of Ruskin's work separately; but it has been a main theme of this Biography to illustrate their intimate connexion, both in Ruskin's thought and in his deeds. It is this which gives consistency to his life, system to his thought, and the distinctive character to his writings. And thus I come in conclusion to the third of the great principles, to which I referred above, as governing Ruskin's criticism of art, and as securing to it an enduring value. Art not for art's sake, but art in relation to life; art as the expression of individual and of national character; life without industry as guilt, but industry without art as brutality; beauty in a world governed by social justice: these are ideas implied in all Ruskin's books, but stated most clearly in the Oxford lectures. And this is another reason why his influence is still vital. “However dissimilar the inspiration of Tolstoi and Ruskin,” says one of the greatest of French critics, “their works nevertheless have certain features in common, and these are their noblest. I would not assert that the authors did not aspire to the glory of writing well; but their first aim and intention was to think rightly, to act effectively, to toil for the perfecting of social life.” The “sociological or social school of criticism,” continues M. Brunetière, “is gaining ground.” It is conquering technical diletantism. “Books have their results, and pictures too may have results”; and “if this radical transformation ever takes place, the name which will remain inseparable from the change is that of John Ruskin.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 28–39 of the Bibliography in vol. xxxviii. of the Library Edition.

<sup>2</sup> *The Eagle's Nest*, as quoted above, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Dec. 1, 1899.

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Ruskin's works remain for the final judgment of posterity, and it were idle to speculate further on what it may be. I have tried in this book to illustrate his works by his life, and his life by his works. For my part, as I finish the task and review what he was and what he did, I prefer to think that his influence will be that of the tree, rather than of the moss. "Every noble life leaves the fibre of it interwoven for ever in the work of the world; by so much, evermore, the strength of the human race has gained; more stubborn in the root, higher towards heaven in the branch; and, '*as a teil tree, and as an oak,—whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves,—so the holy seed is in the midst thereof.*'" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. i. chap. iii.

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1876: St. George's Museum opened at Sheffield, ii. 346; address at Sheffield Museum, 348; Feb., March, lectures at the London Institution, etc., 269; visit to St. George's Cottages, Barmouth, 294, 340; publication of *Bibliotheca Pastorum* begun, 373

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1877: publishes *Guide to Venetian Academy*, ii. 302; publication of *St. Mark's Rest*, 302, and *Laws of Féscole* begun, 193; July, speaks on Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 393; visit to Birmingham, 393; Oct., lecture at Kendal, *Yewdale*, 394; Nov., Dec., Oxford lectures, *Readings in Modern Painters*, 397; Dec., lecture at Eton, 394

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1879: writes *Letters on the Lord's Prayer*, ii. 431; Oct., at Broadlands, 430; receives Prince

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1880: Feb., *Fors* resumed, ii. 436; March, lectures at London Institution, 437; candidate for Glasgow Lord Rectorship, 441; Aug., tour in France (Amiens), 445; Oct., publishes *Elements of English Prosody*, 375; Nov., lecture at Eton, 446; writes *Turner Catalogue*, 453; publication of *Bible of Amiens* begun, 446; writes *Fiction Fair and Foul*, 439; writes on *Usury*, 436; Dec., *Arrows of the Chace* published, 442

1881: Feb., second illness, ii. 453-454; Seascale and Brantwood, 454-455

1882: Jan., London, ii. 455; Feb., takes chair at lecture by F. Gale, 455; March, third illness, 456; London diversions, 456-458; July, Sheffield, 460; Aug.-Nov., abroad with Mr. Collingwood, 459-466, Florence, makes acquaintance of Miss Alexander, 463; Dec., Herne Hill, 465; lecture at London Institution, *Cistercian Architecture*, 465-466

1883: Jan., re-elected Professor at Oxford, ii. 466; March, May, Nov., Oxford lectures, *Art of England*, 467, 468; June, lecture in London on Miss Alexander, 467; visits in Scotland, 468

1884: Feb., lectures at the London Institution, *Storm-Cloud*, ii. 470; Feb., address to Academy Girls, 472; works at the Natural History Museum, 473; Oct.-Dec., Oxford lectures, *Pleasures of England*, etc., 475 *seq.*; mental excitement, lecture suspended, 478; visits Farnley, i. 290; ii. 480

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